

EDITED BY

S. A. SMITH

The Oxford Handbook *of* THE HISTORY OF COMMUNISM

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

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Edited by

STEPHEN A. SMITH

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INTRODUCTION

TOWARDS A GLOBAL HISTORY OF COMMUNISM[1]

STEPHEN A. SMITH

> Who is this Moloch who, as the toilers approach him, instead of rewarding them, only recedes, and as a consolation to the exhausted, doomed multitudes crying 'morituri te salutant', can give back only the mocking answer that after their death all will be beautiful on earth. Do you truly wish to condemn all human beings alive today to the sad role of caryatids supporting a floor for others some day to dance on…or of wretched galley slaves, up to their knees in mud, dragging a barge filled with some mysterious treasure and with the humble words 'progress in the future' inscribed on its bows?
>
> Alexander Herzen, 'Before the Storm' (1847)

On the English Embankment in St Petersburg stands a small tablet that bears the following inscription:

> Moored on this spot, the cruiser *Aurora*, with its thundering guns trained on the Winter Palace, elevated 25 October 1917 to become the date that marks the inauguration of a new era, the era of the great socialist revolution.

When the Bolsheviks announced the formation of a government of soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies on 25 October 1917, they believed they were inaugurating a new stage in human history, namely, the beginning of the transition from capitalism, a system they believed was based on exploitation, inequality, and war, to communism. Communism, in their eyes, would be a society without a state or social classes, characterized by radical equality, peace, and all-round human development. In the event, this new phase of human history lasted little more than seventy years, about as long as the reign of Louis XIV. Capitalism would see off communism as surely as it had seen off feudalism. Nevertheless, if the era in which communism grew to become a movement

on a world scale proved to be short-lived, the impact of that movement on the twentieth century was massive, clearly on a par with that of the two world wars.

Since the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 and in the Soviet Union in 1991, there has been an outpouring of scholarship on all aspects of the communist experiment. Historians, once stymied by the paucity of documentation about the secretive world of communism, have been faced since 1991 with a plethora of documentation from the archives of the Communist International (Comintern) and the state, party, and diplomatic organs of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Even in China, where a communist regime continues in seemingly robust health, there has been a widening of access to state archives for the 1950s and 1960s, together with limited access to the archives of the Foreign Ministry. The archives of the Central Committee in Beijing, however, remain firmly shut. Over the past two decades, projects such as INCOMKA, which created a searchable database of the Comintern archive (<http://www.comintern-online.com>), the Harvard Project on Cold War Studies, the Cold War International History Project, and the Open Society Archive in Budapest have processed a vast quantity of material that covers the multifarious activities of communist party-states, efforts to promote world revolution, and the internal activities of national communist parties. Journals such as the *Communisme* (founded in France in 1982), the *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* (Berlin), the *International Newsletter of Communist Studies* (Mannheim), *Journal of Cold War Studies, Cold War History* and, most recently, *Twentieth-Century Communism*, have played a vital part in publishing scholarly work that exploits this new material. As a result of the work of archivists, editors, and scholars, our knowledge and understanding of communist movements and regimes has increased immeasurably over the last two decades.

The thirty-five essays in this *Handbook*, written by a highly international team of scholars, draw on these materials in order to paint a broad canvas of the spread of communism across the globe and, in particular, to sketch the many different aspects of life under communist rule. The chapters are grouped into six parts: the first consists of four essays that focus on the founding fathers, whose ideas and activities were central in legitimizing communist regimes; the second looks at 'global moments', i.e. at the configuration of the world communist movement at five critical points in time; the third examines communist parties and regimes in the major regions of the world; the fourth, fifth, and sixth parts offer detailed analyses of the political, economic, social, and cultural history of regimes that claimed to be building communist societies. Some hard choices had to be made, and the focus of the majority of chapters is on communism in power rather than on communist parties and movements that contended unsuccessfully for power. Readers looking for accounts of the activities of the Communist Party of New Zealand or of the bitter fights between communists and social democrats in the Finnish trade unions will be disappointed. Nonetheless, thematic and geographical coverage of the essays is immense and authors were chosen to represent a diversity of views and to illustrate a range of methodologies and scales of analysis.

Authors were invited to range beyond a single communist state, to think comparatively, and to focus on the similarities and differences between states in order to capture

the historically and culturally changing character of communism. They were encouraged to consider how the schemes and struggles of parties and leaders were constrained and enabled by the particular economic and social structures and by the constellations of political and military power that they inherited from the pre-revolutionary past. Where appropriate, they were encouraged to reflect on how the fortunes of communist governments and movements were shaped by the actions of their adversaries and by the wider economic, political, and cultural forces of the capitalist world. The one exception to the requirement that essays be comparative and/or transnational is the essay on the Chinese revolution, which is singled out for special treatment because it throws into question claims that are still common in the literature to the effect that communist states proved incapable of finding a middle way between state ownership of the economy and the market, that they were intrinsically unreformable, or that ideology was the fundamental determinant of their political evolution. As the twenty-first century advances, it may come to seem that the Chinese revolution was *the* great revolution of the twentieth century, deeper in its mobilization of society, more ambitious in its projects, more far-reaching in its achievements, and in some ways more enduring than its Soviet counterpart. Certainly, more people lived—and still do today—under communist states in East Asia than ever did in post-war Europe. So the *Handbook* distances itself from histories of communism that concentrate primarily on the Soviet Union, and seeks to reflect the wealth of work on communism in all corners of the globe. But if the Soviet Union cannot be assumed to be typical of communist regimes, it remains the prototype for all such regimes, and until the 1960s it functioned as the nerve centre of the world communist movement. Moreover, the historiography of the Soviet Union is more developed and has been generally more innovative than that of other countries, with the exception of East Germany (German Democratic Republic), so it is right that in an Oxford University Press series that 'seeks to lift debate out of excessively worn historiographical ruts', the Soviet experience should be fully reflected in the individual chapters. Recent historiography of the Soviet Union, for example, has focused on the specificity of the late-Stalinist and Khrushchev periods, and work on the Brezhnev era is now beginning, enriching our understanding of the Soviet experiment as one that was only halfway through its cycle of development by the time that Stalin died in 1953. This reminds us that communism everywhere was a historically evolving project whose domestic and international significance changed over time, so historians must be cautious in seeking to capture some single essence of communist rule.

That said, all regimes under review in the *Handbook* were generically similar. All—with the exception of a handful of a democratically elected administrations in India (Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura) and, perhaps, Moldova—were brought into existence through the seizure of power by a communist party organized along 'democratic centralist' lines. Such parties rapidly proceeded to establish monopoly control of the state. All subscribed to an official ideology of Marxism-Leninism, sometimes supplemented by local variants such as Mao Zedong Thought; all established far-reaching state ownership of the economy; all subordinated independent organization to the control of the party; all subjected intellectual and cultural activity to tight control. These features

constituted the common elements of communist regimes across the globe. Yet there was also immense variety between regimes—one thinks of the differences between two physically adjacent states such as Yugoslavia and Albania by the 1960s—variety that derived from differences in levels of economic development, social structures, cultural and religious traditions, and, not least, from the different international conjunctures in which communist parties came to power. The Handbook avoids reducing communism to a single, all-determining essence, as the Black Book of Communism tends to do. At the same time, whether one may speak of 'communisms' in the plural, as does *Le Siècle des communismes*, may also be doubted: variations between regimes were substantial, but they are perhaps best construed as mutations of a single genus—its species, as it were—that spread across far-flung geographical spaces and temporal zones.

There will be readers who object to the use of the term 'communist' to classify the regimes and movements under scrutiny. Social scientists have spilt a great deal of ink assessing the value of alternative classifications of these regimes, such as 'totalitarian', 'state socialist', or 'state capitalist', issues that this volume leaves to one side.[2] Marx was notoriously reluctant to spell out what communist society might look like, even though it is safe to say that he would have seen the regimes that ruled in his name as a caricature of his vision. Nevertheless it has become clearer since the opening of archives that however criminal or repressive, however pragmatic and compromising communist regimes may have been, they believed to the bitter end that they were engaged in a long-term process of building communism. 'Communist' could be a self-serving or deliberately misleading label used to prettify squalid regimes, but such regimes believed that history was on their side, and this enabled them to justify in the name of progress the immense sacrifices they demanded of the current generation. Indeed the psychological pressure on communist leaders to imagine that the longed-for society was just around the corner was immense. In 1923, Lev Trotsky surmised that his great-grandson would be a 'citizen of the commune'; Nikita Khrushchev predicted that communism would be achieved by the 1980s; and in August 1958, the Chinese government announced that the creation of the people's communes meant that communism was only a few years away.

What follows is not a conventional introduction in which the editor introduces each chapter of the *Handbook* in turn. Rather it seeks to provide a historical and analytical framework into which the individual chapters can be fitted. Each has been written with a view to being self-standing—available as an independent essay online—although the *Handbook* has been conceived as a unified whole, designed to be both an informative introduction to the field and to provide an overview of the current state of scholarship. The introduction offers a synoptic view of the history of communist revolutions in the twentieth century, followed by a survey of key issues relating to the political, economic, and social structures of communist regimes. While not attempting to discuss historiography in detail, it does seek to give readers some sense of issues that are currently under debate. It aspires to offer a 'global' introduction to communism not only in the geographical sense but also in the sense of seeking to integrate history from above with history from below, to trace the complex interconnections between state and society, and to

convey the social and cultural as well as political and economic realities that shaped the lives of citizens whose fate it was to live under communist rule.[3]

The Arc of Communist Revolution, 1917 to 1991

Perhaps the central issue at stake in the historiography of communist revolutions concerns whether these arose because of objective circumstances, such as economic backwardness, extreme social inequality, endemic poverty, political repression, or colonial rule, or as a result of the wilful actions, sometimes heroic, sometimes desperate, of parties and leaders. The issue may be characterized as a difference between 'structuralist' and 'intentionalist' explanations of communist revolution. In the view of Marx and Engels, communist revolution was largely the outcome of structurally determined processes, principally the contradiction between the increasingly socialized character of capitalist relations of production and the private ownership of the means of production. For Lenin and Mao Zedong, by contrast, revolutions happened principally because of the resolve and tenacity of revolutionary leaders and organizations that strove to capitalize on political crisis. No communist revolution emerged in the way Marx predicted, i.e. directly out of the contradictions of the capitalist system: successful revolutions in Russia, China, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Nicaragua were rooted in economic backwardness, deep-rooted social inequalities, political repression, or colonial domination, but the relationship of these phenomena to capitalism was complex and highly mediated. If one is looking for a single overwhelming cause of communist revolution, it was war rather than the systemic crisis of capitalism. The Bolsheviks were able to seize power because the Provisional Government in 1917 opted to continue to participate in the First World War. Similarly, it was the massive destruction caused by the Second World War that enabled the Soviet Union to install communist states in Eastern Europe and this facilitated the rise to power of communist movements in China, Vietnam, and Korea.

In Russia capitalism began to take off only from the 1890s—although by 1913 the country was the fifth largest industrial power in the world. The roots of revolution can certainly be traced back to socio-economic backwardness and political immobilism, but it was the First World War that triggered a terminal crisis of the tsarist regime. From the turn of the century, industrialization, urbanization, migration to the cities, the emergence of new social classes, such as industrial workers, industrialists, and the professional middle classes, led to deepening social conflict. In the wake of the 1905 Revolution, in the face of domestic unrest and external threat—especially in the Balkans—the autocracy quickly lost the will to undertake substantial political and social reform. Failing to create channels through which new social forces could find political expression, it increasingly lost support even among its traditional supporters, the

landowners and the Church. However, it was the outbreak of war in 1914 that brought political and socio-economic tensions to a head. In February 1917, popular protests against food shortages in the capital, Petrograd, war-weariness, and the withdrawal of support by military and political elites forced the abdication of Nicholas II. The Provisional Government that followed was mildly populist in its politics, but its efforts to create a democratic political order were undermined by its resolve to continue the war. Following the failure of the military offensive in June, the urban working class, the most politicized of the popular classes and one well organized in soviets, factory committees, and trade unions, along with those soldiers garrisoned in the rear, shifted support from the moderate to radical socialists. The still small Bolshevik party began to grow as a result of its unremitting opposition to the 'government of capitalists and landlords' and to the 'imperialist' war. At the same time, peasants grew impatient with the government's failure to enact land reform, and began spontaneously to seize property from the landed gentry. The radical movements that grew apace from summer 1917 to spring 1918 can be construed as a set of discrete revolutions: a workers' revolution concerned with defending jobs through workers' control of production; a peasant revolution concerned to overthrow the landed gentry; a soldiers' and sailors' revolution concerned to democratize the armed forces and bring the war to an end; and assorted movements on the periphery of the Russian Empire demanding national autonomy. As the Provisional Government lurched from crisis to crisis, a discourse of class conflict and socialism, focused on the demands for peace and the transfer of power to the soviets, came to unify these discrete movements, albeit tenuously. This was, in many respects, a remarkable development, given that the working class was small and still tied to the peasantry, the bourgeoisie weak and internally divided, and that key groups, such as soldiers and non-Russian nationalities, did not fit comfortably into any class schema. The failed military coup by General Kornilov at the end of August proved to be a turning point, rallying support for the Bolsheviks. From his hiding place in Finland, Lenin blitzed the Central Committee with demands that it seize power.

The specificity of the Russian Revolution, when compared with later communist revolutions, lay in the autonomy and dynamism of the mass movements. These were the subject of much innovative historiography in the 1970s and 1980s, but in the past two decades there has been a tendency to revert to explanations of a more intentionalist cast that present the Bolshevik seizure of power as no more than a coup by a band of politically determined and ideologically driven men. Such a narrowing of perspective makes it difficult to explain why radical socialism proved appealing and why the Bolsheviks garnered enough support to allow them to stay in power in the critical months after October. On coming to power, the Bolsheviks sought to meet the demands of the mass movements by declaring peace, soviet power, land redistribution, and, briefly, workers' control in the factories. Yet as the country spiralled into economic collapse, bringing unemployment and mass privation in its wake, working-class and peasant support for the new regime fell sharply. In the course of a bitter civil war, the Bolsheviks forged a Red Army that defeated a succession of enemies, including the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Whites, Allied interventionists, and peasant partisans. In so doing, they instituted

key elements of what would become the generic communist system: a highly centralized state under a single party, the crushing of dissent, and the curtailment of popular organizations. In explaining why this came about, intentionalists point to Lenin's determination to concentrate power in a single party and his readiness to stamp out political opposition, while structuralists contend that dictatorship was primarily a response to the desperate problems the Bolsheviks faced in defeating the counter-revolution, in feeding the Red Army and the urban population, in maintaining production for the war effort, and in combating tendencies to crime and social anomie. Significantly, however, once the Bolsheviks had trounced the Whites in 1920, they made no attempt to return to the decentralized vision of socialism associated with the popular revolutions of 1917, as the sailors of Kronstadt learned to their cost in 1921. Soviet democracy and workers' control vanished for good (although these aspirations would return ephemerally in some later revolutions, notably in Catalonia in 1936 and in Yugoslavia in the 1950s).

If much of the historiography of the Russian Revolution stresses how ruinous economic circumstances constrained the Bolsheviks' room for manoeuvre, a comparative perspective highlights the extent to which objective developments played into their hands, at least during 1917. The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci called October the 'revolution against Das Kapital', crediting the Bolsheviks with understanding that 'collective, social will', 'not raw economic facts', 'moulds objective reality'.[4] This was perceptive. Yet one could say that the Bolsheviks, though attuned to the importance of decisive action, were more the unintended beneficiaries than the moulders of 'objective reality'. Right up to August 1917, they were on the margins of Russian politics, and without minimizing the importance of Lenin's perspicacity and determination, their opportunity to seize power sprang from the fact that the war-induced crisis had bankrupted a succession of political forces from monarchism to liberalism to moderate socialism. The true achievement of the Bolsheviks lay not so much in seizing power as in consolidating it. If one looks, by contrast, to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), one appreciates how desperately it had to struggle to survive against the depredations of the Guomindang (1928–36) and the Japanese (1937–45), and then to defeat the Guomindang in conventional warfare between 1946 and 1949. Of course, 'objective' factors—the massive human and physical destruction of the Sino-Japanese War together with bitter civil war, economic collapse, and Guomindang corruption—played their part in helping the CCP's rise to power, but the balance of causation was skewed far more towards the 'subjective' factor, i.e. to the ability of the CCP to 'mould objective reality' than was the case with the Bolsheviks in 1917.

No subsequent regime came to power in the way the Bolsheviks had. Yet the Second Congress of the Comintern declared in 1920 that the model of Bolshevik organization—a highly centralist party characterized by 'iron discipline'—and the Bolshevik strategy of insurrection—a party-led insurgency, generally of an armed character—had universal applicability. In fact, Bolshevik organization in 1917 had been loose and the party's seizure of power had depended on the passive acquiescence of the Petrograd garrison. It was only in the course of the civil war that the Bolsheviks came to realize that revolutionary possibilities could be created by a disciplined party and, above all, by an army.

When the revolution was brought to regions such as the Caucasus and Central Asia it came not via popular mobilization but via a conscript Red Army, staffed by professional officers. Similarly, the Hungarian soviet republic soon learned that armies were more critical than popular organizations: in spring 1919 a militia-style army of mainly factory workers proved unable to withstand the assault of the invading Romanian army, forcing the government of Béla Kun to turn to elite units and officers drawn from the Austro-Hungarian army, officers motivated by patriotic revulsion at the dismemberment of their country rather than by any love for workers' power. In China, too, the critical importance of an effective armed force was brought home brutally to the CCP in 1927, when the party was almost annihilated by its erstwhile allies in the Guomindang. As Mao Zedong later put it: 'Having guns, we can create party organizations . . . we can also create cadres, create schools, create culture, create mass movements.'[5] In all revolutions subsequent to October 1917, in fact, communists came to power primarily as a result of disciplined party organizations (including a powerful secret police) and effective armed force, and not by winning influence in popular organizations such as soviets, factory committees, or trade unions.

The First World War shattered the social and economic fabric of European societies, destroying empires and discrediting liberal democracy. The Bolsheviks construed this as proof that capitalism was in its death agony. The degree of revolutionary turbulence set in train by the fall of the German Reich and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was indeed profound: in the first half of 1919, short-lived soviet republics were proclaimed in Bremen, Hungary, Bavaria, and Slovakia, and Italy was convulsed by factory and land occupations during the *biennio rosso* of 1919–20. In Italy and Central Europe the beneficiaries of the crisis were not radicalized soldiers, workers, and peasants but the demobilized officers and nationalist students who formed paramilitary units to combat 'international Bolshevism'. The attempt of the German Communist Party—with 350,000 members, the strongest party in Europe—to seize power in March 1921 was a shambles, and in summer 1923, when Germany was wracked by hyperinflation and French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr, the most daring challenge to the Weimar Republic came not from a weakened communist party, but from Hitler in Munich. As late as November 1922, however, Grigorii Zinoviev, chair of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, could tell its Fourth Congress: 'What we are now experiencing is not one of capitalism's periodic crises but *the* crisis of capitalism, its twilight, its disintegration.'[6]

In fact, from the early 1920s the Soviet government was forced to face up to the reality of a downturn in revolutionary prospects, international isolation, and a crippling internal economic situation. With the exception of its satellite Mongolia, which was brought into the socialist fold in 1924, Soviet Russia would remain isolated and dependent on its own resources for twenty-eight years. In this context, the meaning of socialist revolution underwent drastic revision: it ceased to be understood in terms of radical democracy and far-reaching equality, and became reconfigured in terms of building a strong state capable of mobilizing the human and material resources of an impoverished country in order to bring about rapid economic and social modernization. Presiding

over a shattered agrarian society, the Bolsheviks found themselves responding to many of the same challenges—the need rapidly to industrialize, to modernize agriculture, to build a credible defence capability—that had pressed upon the late-tsarist government. Of course, the Bolsheviks articulated these challenges in the language of socialism, but objectively the tasks were very similar. The desire to put an end to what Stalin called 'the continual beatings suffered because of backwardness' galvanized all subsequent communist states and ensured that the needs of citizens, especially those in the countryside, were ruthlessly subordinated to the task of raising investment in industry and defence. Evgenii Preobrazhenskii, a supporter of Trotsky in the inner-party struggle of 1924 to 1927, called this process 'primitive socialist accumulation'. It was bound to be a coercive process, since it involved squeezing resources from peasants, who were required to sell agricultural produce to the state at below market prices, and from workers whose wages were kept low and working hours long. If Trotsky or Bukharin had defeated Stalin in the conflict that rent the Russian Communist Party, they would not have been able to avoid 'primitive socialist accumulation', although there is no reason to suppose that their victory would have entailed the horror and bloodshed unleashed by Stalin.

Historians continue to argue about the relationship of Stalinism to Leninism. Did the extreme violence of Stalinism arise logically out of Lenin's model of the militant vanguard party with its antipathy to dissent? This is a question on which neither intentionalists nor structuralists are unanimous. In 1904 no less a person than the 25-year-old Trotsky warned about the implications of Lenin's views on party organization: 'The party apparatus at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the apparatus; and finally a single "dictator" substitutes himself for the Central Committee.'[7] Yet in later life Trotsky denied that there was any continuity between Leninism and Stalinism, insisting that a 'river of blood' separated the two. Neither view seems wholly credible. The key institutions of the party-state were certainly in place by the time of Lenin's death in 1924. Terror, forced labour, show trials all had their antecedents under Lenin. Nevertheless, what Stalin called the 'great break' of forced collectivization and pell-mell industrialization (1928–32) was exactly that: a violent revolution imposed upon a reluctant population in order to bring about a massive development of economy and society. For the peasantry, who constituted the mass of the population, living in collective farms proved to be an altogether bleaker experience than living under the New Economic Policy of the 1920s, at least until the 1960s. And for the population as a whole, Stalin's brutal dictatorship, the unrestrained use of violence, the cult of power, endemic fear, paranoia about encirclement and internal wreckers, signalled a sharp deterioration of political life. Residual emancipatory impulses from the Revolution of 1917, moreover, which had continued to reverberate through the 1920s (in relation, for example, to women's emancipation, nation-building by the non-Russian peoples, or experimentation in the arts) were snuffed out.

Yet Stalinism proved to be only one stage of Soviet rule. When Stalin died in 1953 the development of the Soviet Union had only reached its halfway mark. The changes initiated under Nikita Khrushchev, although qualitatively not as substantial as those brought about by the 'great break', were nevertheless significant: collective leadership

of the party was restored, terror was abandoned, party control over the secret police was asserted, the concept of 'class enemy' was expunged from official discourse, a temporary 'thaw' in cultural life took place, and social structures stabilized. This pattern of relatively distinct stages of development was characteristic of all communist regimes. It was in the People's Republic of China (PRC), however, that such distinctions were most dramatic: the initial phase of 'new democracy' did not last long and was soon followed by the 'socialist high tide' of 1955 and the catastrophic Great Leap Forward (1958–61); the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) brought China close to anarchy; and then, from the late 1970s, Maoism was utterly repudiated and a rapid transition to a market economy inaugurated.

If the institutions and practices forged in the Soviet Union were taken up by communist parties throughout the world, differences in the way that national communist parties came to power were of paramount significance. In China the CCP developed a model of revolution that came to exercise huge influence on communist parties in colonial societies, especially in South East and East Asia. It did so by promoting nationalism as the dominant discourse through which the Chinese people was mobilized: significantly, this was not the statist nationalism of the Guomindang, but a class-inflected, anti-imperialist nationalism that harnessed a revolutionary economic and social programme to the achievement of national liberation. In addition, from the late 1920s, the Red Army developed a strategy of guerrilla warfare as a means of avoiding extermination at the hand of the Guomindang. Relying on the local population—the 'sea' in which the guerrilla 'fish' must swim to survive—it sought to lure the forces of the National Revolutionary Army into a territory, surround them, and split them up, using hit-and-run tactics. However, it was only with the outbreak of the war against Japan in 1937 that serious revolutionary possibilities emerged. In the course of the war, which saw the loss of around 20 million military and civilian lives, Guomindang officials and regular army units withdrew from the localities leaving rural elites and former warlord forces to contend with the Communists and the Japanese. In this situation, the Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army became the CCP's principal instruments of revolution, allowing it to establish base areas and to instil its ideology, values, and discipline into the local populace. By 1945, there were nineteen base areas in existence, stretching in an arc across north China and south along the east coast, with 90 million people in areas under the control of the Maoist Eighth Route Army and 34 million under the control of the New Fourth Army. However, the alliances and tactics applied in these bases varied according to local ecology, social structure, and particular needs and grievances of the peasantry. There proved to be no natural affinity between the CCP and the peasantry, although peasants comprised the great majority of soldiers, party members, and local activists. Only when peasants were persuaded that the CCP provided the best defence against Japanese brutality, Guomindang retaliation, and local warlords and bandits, would they join party-led campaigns for tax relief, rent reduction, increased production, and, during the civil war, for land reform. The rise to power of the CCP rested as much on building coalitions of diverse social forces, including social and cultural elites, as on mobilizing the peasantry. This willingness to engage the privileged

classes on patriotic grounds was sharply at odds with the class struggle message of the Bolsheviks in 1917.

The victory of the Soviet Red Army over Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria created possibilities for communist revolution in Eastern Europe. This had been the principal theatre of war in Europe, the site of the bloodiest confrontation between communism and Nazism, the region where 6 million Jews had been exterminated. Losses were scarcely imaginable: Poland lost 22 per cent of its population (5.7 million people) and Yugoslavia 11 per cent. Historians debate whether Stalin intended from the start to establish communist governments, again in a pale reflection of the intentionalist versus structuralist debate. There appears to have been some flexibility initially on the Soviet side, with Stalin principally concerned that the Soviet Union should be protected from Germany by a ring of biddable states. In the case of Poland and Romania, however, the Soviets from the first exerted significant military and political control; in the case of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet zone in Germany policy was more pragmatic. Relatedly, there is debate as to whether the Soviet Union and the communist parties of Central and Eastern Europe were sincere in their efforts to form 'people's democracies', i.e. coalitions with social democratic, populist, and democratic parties. Certainly, there was rather widespread support for radical social reform in 1945, pre-war elites having been discredited by their collaboration with the Nazis. In Hungary, Poland, and Romania, hundreds of thousands of acres of private property were turned over to peasants. In Czechoslovakia, the country with the most developed industrial base, the communist party won 38 per cent of votes in elections in 1946. Nevertheless the abuses of the Red Army and the commandeering of industrial plant and grain for shipment to the Soviet Union soon fostered animosity. The Soviet secret police, the NKVD, was quick to impose itself on the secret police throughout the region, and non-communist parties were watched closely. Whether the breakdown of coalition governments was deliberately engineered by Moscow as part of its strategy of Sovietization or whether it was a response to President Truman's new policy of containment and the Marshall Plan is again contentious. Certainly by late 1947, non-communist parties had been forcibly merged or dissolved and communist parties themselves were subject to a process of Stalinization.

Elsewhere, in Yugoslavia, Albania, and very nearly Greece—all countries that had experienced ferocious Axis occupation—resistance movements had emerged during the war that split between right-leaning nationalists and communists. Communist parties, repressed by authoritarian regimes during the interwar years, proved well suited to provide the disciplined leadership needed in movements of national resistance. In Yugoslavia in April 1942, Tito dropped a 'class war' approach to revolution in favour of one based on 'national liberation'; and with the help of Soviet troops, his partisans cleared out the Nazis in 1944, leaving the communist party the only effective political force. Significantly, it was Tito, the head of a self-confident and popular party, who first stood up to Stalin. Historians debate whether his excommunication by the second meeting of the new Cominform in June 1948 was due to his supposedly adventurist policies in Trieste and Albania or his attempt independently of Moscow to strike a deal with Bulgaria and Greece.

In South East and East Asia communist parties also took up the banner of national liberation, but enjoyed a greater degree of legitimacy than their counterparts in Eastern Europe. The attempt by the USA and its allies to 'contain' communism in Asia, together with the efforts of nationalists to assert their different visions of self-determination, would shape the Cold War and lead to two deadly wars in Korea and Indochina. In South East Asia, communist parties that had perfected underground organization during the 1930s rose to the challenges of the Second World War, forging broad anti-Japanese guerrilla movements, often with arms and training supplied by the Allies. In 1945, with Japanese and European colonial rule in tatters, these parties emerged strong in Vietnam, Malaya, Burma, and Indonesia. Yet their capacity to determine the course of post-war events proved variable, and only in Vietnam did they succeed in coming to power. The experience of colonial rule had not been uniform and this was a factor that shaped the post-war character of communist parties. In Vietnam, for example, there had been no parallel to the repressive policies practised by the Japanese in Korea, where agrarian and labour unions had been dissolved in 1937, Korean rescinded as the language of tuition in schools, and Koreans forced to adopt Japanese names. The record of resistance to the Japanese of the Korean Communist Party went back to the early 1920s, and on coming to power it looked with deep suspicion on those Koreans it perceived to have acquiesced in Japanese rule.

In September 1945, without consulting representatives of the Korean people, the Allies divided the Korean peninsula along the 38th Parallel, the USA controlling the South and the Soviets the North. The failure to hold nationwide elections in 1948 led to the formation of an authoritarian government under Syngman Rhee in the South, which crushed powerful left-wing uprisings, and the formation of a factious and despotic government under Kim Il Sung in the North. The Soviet archives have shed light on the circumstances that led Kim to launch an invasion of the South on 25 June 1950 to reunify the peninsula. When Kim first broached the subject in 1949, Stalin rejected the idea; but in the wake of the communist victory in China and the acquisition by the Soviets of the atom bomb, Stalin dropped his opposition. The Korean War became the first war by proxy between the superpowers. The USA responded to the invasion of the South with massive force, determined to draw a line against what it perceived to be communist expansionism. Asia, not Europe, became the principal theatre of the Cold War, part of the larger battle of the USA and the Soviet Union for influence over the political and social development of the former colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The death of the dictator on 5 March 1953 ended the process of Stalinization that had been taking place in the communist governments of Central and Eastern Europe. It was not until February 1956, however, that the critical turning point came when Khrushchev delivered a speech to the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in which he denounced the personality cult of Stalin and the bloodletting of the purges. His speech had an electrifying effect on the communist world. In Poland worker unrest broke out in June which culminated in an anti-Stalinist faction, led by Władysław Gomułka, taking control of the communist party and liberalizing civic life

to a small degree. In Hungary workers, backed by students and intellectuals, took to the streets, prompting Soviet troops to intervene. In the fighting that took place between 4 and 7 November, some 2,500 insurgents and over 700 Red Army soldiers lost their lives. In June 1958 Imre Nagy, leader of the reform communists, was hanged. In China and Vietnam the governments cautiously encouraged intellectuals to speak out, but soon took fright at the Hundred Flowers Movement and Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm movements. François Furet branded the year 1956 the 'beginning of the end' of communism, yet with the singular exception of Poland, communism in Eastern Europe proved essentially stable for the next thirty years, as it did in Asia. Indeed by the end of the 1950s the world communist movement—notwithstanding the alarming cracks in the Sino-Soviet alliance—had reason to feel confident. The Soviet economy was booming and technological feats such as Sputnik, the first satellite to orbit the earth in 1957, together with Yurii Gagarin's flight into space in 1961, fed the belief that the communist bloc was stealing a march on the West. At the Twenty-First Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in January 1959, A. I. Kirichenko, secretary of the Central Committee, boasted that 'the ideas of communism have become the ruling ideas across the entire world, no borders or barriers impede them, they conquer peoples by their life-affirming strength and truth'.[8]

Just a few weeks before this boast, revolutionary guerrillas, led by Fidel Castro, defeated Batista's government in Cuba. This marked the onset of a decade of revolutionary turbulence across Latin America. The local communist party in Cuba, which dated back to 1925, played no part in the insurgency. Buoyed by popular support, Castro's forces proceeded to carry out land reform and nationalize US firms. Cuba was the only communist country where the 'class war' was waged primarily by expelling the bourgeoisie to a neighbouring country. Only in April 1961 did the Cuban government begin to move into the Soviet orbit, mainly as a response to the CIA-backed 'Bay of Pigs' invasion. The Soviet orientation firmed up when Khrushchev rashly decided to place nuclear missiles on the island to deter any further aggression by the USA. Thus crystallized the most anxious moment in the entire Cold War, when for thirteen days in October 1962 the USA and the Soviet Union teetered on the brink of armageddon. Henceforth Cuba was to prove a close ally of the Soviet Union, yet it retained considerable autonomy, especially in its rejection of the Soviet view that revolution in the Third World must go through distinct stages of development, the most that could be achieved—and then only in certain condition—being a democratic non-capitalist path of development. Comandante Ernesto 'Che' Guevara advocated a much more ambitious vision of socialist revolution in Latin America, based on rural guerrilla warfare, in which the Andes would the play the same role as the Sierra Maestra had done in Cuba.

In the light of the Soviet archives and new diplomatic sources from the PRC, we see that the Sino-Soviet alliance was far more dynamic up to 1958 than many appreciated at the time. But this makes the speed and completeness of its breakdown all the more puzzling. Historians agree that Mao Zedong's decision to launch the Great Leap Forward, which was in essence a recklessly utopian leap away from the Soviet model, was at the root of the Sino-Soviet split. But there is little agreement on the respective importance

of other factors, including economic matters relating to loans, technology transfers, and border regions; military matters relating to the atomic weapons programme, military bases, and intelligence; or foreign policy matters relating to Taiwan, India, and Khrushchev's policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with the West. At one extreme, some historians put the accent on deep structural factors, notably the rivalry and mistrust between two geographically contiguous great powers; at the other, some stress a factor as apparently trivial as the personality clash between Khrushchev and Mao.

The Sino-Soviet split testified to the steady development of national conflict within the communist bloc. Stalin had construed communist internationalism to mean implicit obedience on the part of national communist parties to the one existing socialist state. After 1945, the rise of other parties to state power gave them potential autonomy from Moscow, a development that was masked at the time by the intervention of the Red Army in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. By the 1960s, however, not only China was asserting its independence from Moscow. In 1967 Romania left the Warsaw Pact and the following year declined to join the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia. Such national conflicts were not always 'radial' ones between Moscow and its satellites: they could involve 'regional' hegemons such as Yugoslavia (in conflict with Albania) or Vietnam (in conflict with Kampuchea and Laos). This steady 'nationalization' of the communist movement ultimately gave rise to such bizarre phenomena—bizarre, at least, when judged by the canons of socialist internationalism—as the invasion and occupation of communist Cambodia by Vietnam (1978–89) and war between Vietnam and China in 1979. Fundamentally, such conflicts erupted because communist regimes, like all twentieth-century polities, based themselves on the territorial and social space of the nation-state. These regimes, moreover, focused the identities of their citizens on a nation often defined in ethnic rather than civic terms. A symptom of the congruence of Communist regimes with the nation-state is the fact that none of the three states with federal structures – the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia – survived into the post-Communist era. Yet through the 1960s and 1970s the significance of nationalism for the long-term viability of the communist movement was largely hidden by the expansion of communist influence into new regions of the world.

Rapid decolonization in the British and French empires in the 1950s and 1960s meant that many newly independent states looked to the USSR as a model of state-led economic growth and social and cultural modernization. Moscow went to great lengths to cooperate with anti-imperialist governments, seeing their support as vital in the Cold War battle, even if this was at the expense of local communist parties. In Egypt Nasser received strong Soviet backing because of his sweeping agrarian reform, his health and welfare measures, and for standing up to the West over Suez in 1956. Soviet support did not falter when Nasser crushed the small Egyptian Communist Party in 1959. In Iraq General 'Abd-al-Karim Qasim overthrew the monarchy in 1958, with the help of the communist-led mass organizations of students, workers, and women, whose membership comprised as much as one-fifth of the population. Again Soviet support did not falter when Qasim turned against the communists. In 1963, he in turn was overthrown by Ba'thists, to whom the Soviets duly switched their support.

In Africa no fewer than thirty-five out of fifty-three countries declared themselves to be 'socialist' in some form or other between the 1950s and 1980s. Some of the newly decolonized states, such as Tanzania, espoused a distinctively 'African' form of socialism, although this was generally seen to be failing by the 1970s. A few opted for Soviet-style communism, attracted by the prospect of Soviet aid and the supposed advantages of state-directed economic development. As early as 1963, Congo-Brazzaville espoused 'scientific socialism' and, following a military takeover in 1968, declared itself a 'people's republic'. Similar developments occurred in Somalia in 1970—where the communist party was not founded until 1976—and in Ethiopia, where strikes, demonstrations, and mutinies overthrew Haile Selassie in 1974. There the military junta (Derg) espoused Marxism-Leninism in 1976, although again a workers' party was not formed until 1984. In Lusophone Africa, and in what would become Zimbabwe, anti-colonial guerrilla movements provided a spur to the creation of Soviet-style regimes. Neither Frelimo in Mozambique nor the the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) started out as movements of this type, but in 1977 both declared themselves Marxist-Leninist. Despite this evidence of advance, the Soviet Union had little experience of Africa and pursued a cautious policy largely confined to modest diplomatic and financial support for liberation movements. It was only following Cuba's lead, that Moscow started to provide some military support to Angola to help it defeat the attempt of the South African army to invade the country in 1976. Yet the ease with which putatively Marxist-Leninist regimes subsequently 'undeclared' themselves to be such, testified to the superficiality of revolution in most parts of the African continent. Benin (Dahomey), for example, declared itself Marxist-Leninist in 1974 only to drop that appellation in 1989, and President Kérékou converted first to Islam and then to born-again Christianity.

Historians tend to treat the history of communism separately from the history of anti-communism, yet the two were dialectically connected, especially after 1945. NSC-68, the document secretly issued by the US National Security Council on 14 April 1950, warned: 'The Soviet Union … is animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world. … Being a totalitarian dictatorship, the Kremlin's objectives in these policies is the total subjective submission of the peoples now under its control.'[9] Throughout the Cold War the USA and its NATO allies, backed by assorted dictators in Latin American and Asia, largely succeeded in checking the expansion of communism through military, economic and political means. The West employed a battery of methods to 'contain' communism, from conventional warfare, as in Korea, Malaya, or Indochina; to the overthrow of legitimate governments, as in Iran, Chile, or Nicaragua; to economic and military support for authoritarian regimes (Latin America *passim*); to assassinations and clandestine operations linked to right-wing terrorists (Gladio in Italy); and, not least, by relentless escalation of the arms race. More seemly—and arguably, more effective—methods of countering communist expansion included the promotion of intellectual and artistic freedom and, from the 1970s, the advocacy of human rights (the Helsinki Final Act of 1975). Most of these methods, with the obvious exception of the latter, were also used

by the Soviet Union, although it was far less involved in 'hot' wars than its US adversary. Nevertheless, despite the material and human resources invested by each side in conquering its adversary, the oft-made claim that the USA 'won' the Cold War is questionable. Doubtless the burden of military expenditure fell far heavier on the USSR than the USA, and doubtless Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative—'Star Wars'—threatened to make the economic problems of the Soviet Union intolerable, yet there is no evidence that these were immediate causes of its fall.

If we are looking to explain the demise of communism, we turn once more to the conundrum of 'intentionalism' versus 'structuralism'—to the debate between those who argue that the end of communism in Eastern Europe was brought about by the conscious agency of individuals and groups and those who see it brought about by the operation of impersonal, long-term forces. Those inclined to intentionalism emphasize the roles played by individuals such as Lech Walesa, Pope John Paul II, Mikhail Gorbachev, even Nicolae Ceaușescu. Poland, where signs that the system's days were numbered came as early as the mass strikes of the 1970s, provides a striking example of the importance of visionary leadership and mass action. In 1980, the government of Edvard Gierek, desperate to curb living standards to meet the surging cost of energy and of loan repayments to Western banks, was forced to recognize the independent trade-union movement, Solidarność. The speed with which the latter snowballed into a mass movement promoting workers' rights and democratic change so alarmed the government that in December 1981, General Wojceich Jaruzelski declared a 'state of war', arresting Solidarność leader Lech Walesa and thousands of others. By April 1989, however, the government had come to recognize that it could no longer go on ruling in the old way. Solidarność was once again legalized and went on to win a resounding victory in the elections in June. In Czechoslovakia and Hungary the role of 'civil society' was less dramatic in bringing about the end of communism: there reformist elements within the communist parties, conscious that economic reform was failing and that one-party rule was unsustainable, played a correspondingly larger role in effecting change. However, the prime example of the part played by individual leadership in bringing about the end of communism was that played by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, above all in his decision not to intervene militarily to support the regimes of the Eastern Bloc.

Others are drawn to more structuralist explanations of the fall of communism. For a few, the collapse of the system was inscribed in its origins, in the very attempt to realize 'integral' socialism. For others, disintegrative tendencies steadily gathered pace from the 1960s, working to undermine the system: these included declining rates of economic growth; the inability of the command economy to move from mass production to intensive growth; the burden of military expenditure; and the emergence of educated professional strata who baulked at their exclusion from political participation. It is doubtful that nationalism in the non-Russian republics was one such corrosive factor: however, it did become decisive between 1989 and 1991, when nationalist protests, especially in the Baltic, derailed Gorbachev's plans for partial democratization and economic reform. What was remarkable about the demise of communism throughout the Eastern Bloc was its largely non-violent character. Where governments agreed to negotiate with

the opposition, as in Poland and Hungary, the transition went more smoothly than in countries such as East Germany or Czechoslovakia, where people took to the streets. Nevertheless even here the mass demonstrations were largely peaceful. Violence was mainly confined to Romania, which was close to economic ruin as a result of Ceaușescu's determination to pay back the country's alarming foreign debt, and to Yugoslavia where the break-up of the federal state saw communist leaders garb themselves in the mantle of ethnic nationalism.

Peter Nolan has made a cogent case to the effect that policy choices were critical in determining the variant fates of the USSR and the PRC. In his view, the fall of the Soviet Union was less the direct outcome of structural problems and more the consequence of the particular policies adopted during perestroika, mainly Gorbachev's choosing to carry out economic and political reform simultaneously; his reluctance to use force to preserve the Union; and the lack of consensus in the political elite. This perspective can be enlarged to suggest how misguided policies set in train more structurally determined processes that eroded the power of the party-state, the command-administrative economy, and the structures of quasi-imperial dominance, accelerating the evolution of the federal republics of the USSR into independent nation-states. Conversely, the success of reform in China can be explained by the fact that economic reform was not accompanied by political reform; that economic reform was incremental rather than the 'big bang' favoured by the Washington consensus, and by the fact that the state remained strong throughout the process of transition. Not all historians are persuaded that policy choices were decisive; they prefer to stress structural factors that determined the outcome of reform, such as differences in the levels of industrialization, urbanization, and small-scale industry in the Soviet Union and China, plus differences in traditions of entrepreneurship and the differential availability of capital from overseas. Nevertheless, whatever determinacy one assigns to policy, the success of reform in the PRC does require reconsideration of some of the overly determinist explanations of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe that were current in the 1990s.

Communist Politics

With the exception of Czechoslovakia, communist regimes took root in societies that had no traditions of representative democracy, civil liberties, or rule of law. In that respect, they represented a continuation of deep-rooted patterns of authoritarian government now reconfigured to fit the age of mass politics. In no sense were party-states accountable to those in whose name they claimed to rule—whether that was the 'proletariat' or the 'people'—though the degree of unaccountability was less in some cases than in others, e.g. workers' self-management in Yugoslavia empowered labour in a way that did not occur elsewhere in Europe and served to curb the power of the state and party elites. Primary decision-making was confined to the very highest level of the party-state—to the politburo or its analogues—although policy implementation

depended heavily on officials at the lower levels of the party and state apparatuses and, in the last analysis, on the willingness of citizens to comply with directives from on high. Almost all communist countries were one-party states, and where other parties existed, such as the People's Party and the Democratic Party in Poland, they were virtually toothless. In almost all countries the system of power was a dual one in which the party apparatus at central, regional, and local levels monitored the corresponding levels of the administrative, judicial, and military organs. Formally, sovereignty was vested in 'democratically' elected state institutions, such as the Supreme Soviet in the Soviet Union, the State Council in the PRC, or the National Assembly in Vietnam, which were the supreme bodies responsible for law-making and for the appointment of ministers. In some countries there were also 'united front' organizations, such as the People's Political Consultative Conference in China and its homologue in North Korea. In reality, all important legislative and administrative decisions were taken by the central leadership of the party, usually called a politburo. Ruling communist parties were diverse in their size and structural complexity. In Cuba in 1969 party membership stood at only 55,000, or 0.7 per cent of the population, and the party had not yet developed a network of local organizations. By 1988, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had 19 million members, or 8 per cent of the population; by 2011, the CCP had up to 83 million members, or around 6 per cent of the population. In the 1960s the biggest communist movement outside a Communist state was led by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which had tens of millions of supporters and organizations for youth, women, peasants, labourers, artists, and others. In 1965, it was accused of an abortive coup that killed several top army leaders. Following a counter-coup, the army, Muslim groups, and paramilitary thugs purged suspected communists, killing between 500,000 and 1 million by 1967.

Analysts differ on the question of the extent to which politics sprang from ideological principles. Some, such as Martin Malia, argued that communist regimes were nothing less than 'ideocracies', bent on the realization of a utopian vision. Others, while recognizing the rootedness of policy in ideology, argue that policy resulted from the encounter of ideas and principles with intractable realities and unforeseen contingencies. What the key elements of Marxist-Leninist ideology actually were was never clear, and the contradictory interpretations that resulted from this ensured that crafting policy was never straightforward. Once in power, moreover, communist governments faced huge problems for which Marxian theory left them woefully unprepared, whether in the form of a capitalist system that grew in dynamism over the twentieth century, or in the form of mass politics in which national identity seemed constantly to trump class identity. Stalinism, moreover, petrified the ideas of Marx and Lenin into dogma, so that they became more of a sustaining illusion than a guide to action. Nevertheless, Marxism-Leninism did adapt to different conditions and new circumstances. In Cuba the ruling ideology was modulated by the accents of Jose Martì, the nineteenth-century writer and philosopher; by fierce antipathy to US imperialism; by justification of revolutionary violence; by belief in racial and sexual equality (notwithstanding a prevalent machismo); and by Guevara's distinctive conception of the New Socialist Man. By

contrast, Kim Il Sung's ideology of *juche*, codified in the North Korean Constitution of 1972, stressed self-reliance, sacrifice, a chauvinist nationalism, and the struggle to build a morally purified but prosperous nation.

Many communist parties (Soviet Russia, China, Kampuchea) consolidated their power through the use of terror, although this was not true everywhere (e.g. Nicaragua or East Germany). Yet if communists saw revolutionary violence as the 'midwife of history', they never glorified war and violence in the manner of fascism. On 2 September 1918, the Bolsheviks launched a 'Red Terror', but historians differ as to whether this arose from a principled belief in terror as an instrument of revolution—the Bolsheviks sometimes spoke with admiration of the Jacobin revolutionary tribunals—or as a response to the near-fatal attack on Lenin in 1918 and the mounting threat from the White armies. The fact that other communist states resorted to terror in consolidating their power tends to support the former interpretation, although we should not forget that all faced ferocious challenges from domestic and external foes, who themselves did not flinch at using terror to wipe out their communist adversaries. What is harder to explain is the outbreak of the Great Terror in Stalin's Russia in 1937–8, since the belief that 'enemies of the people' were plotting to overthrow the regime was largely fantasy. In the course of fifteen months, approximately 1.5 million people were arrested, almost half of whom were shot. Similar purges took place in Mongolia, where Buddhist lamas and party officials were accused of being Japanese spies. Indeed, proportionately, the terror of Khorloogiin Choibalsan was more sanguinary than that of Stalin, hitting about 5 per cent of the Mongolian population. Some argue that Stalinist terror was a projection of traits in Stalin's character—his chronic suspiciousness and determination to remove all rivals—others that the terror acquired a dynamic of its own in a context of institutional rivalries, with each level of the party and state administration striving to outdo each other in winkling out 'class enemies' and 'wreckers'.

The other spectacular case of communist terror occurred in Cambodia, although Pol Pot did not declare Cambodia a communist state until 1977. No revolution would have taken place in that country had it not been for the carpet bombing of the Second Indochina War and the right-wing coup against Prince Sihanouk in March 1970. From a few thousand, the Khmer Rouge grew by 1973 to some 30,000, by which time it controlled about a third of the country. Following the collapse of the pro-US government of Lon Nol on 17 April 1975, the Khmer Rouge marched into the capital, Phnom Penh, a city of 3 million. Paranoid that Khmer culture faced extinction, hostile to Vietnamese hegemonism, detesting urban lifestyles as morally corrupt, idealizing the peasantry, and obsessed with self-sufficiency, the Khmer Rouge proceeded to expel the population from the capital and to abolish money ('no money, no capitalism'). The grotesque consequence was that over one-fifth of Cambodia's population were killed or died of malnutrition, disease, and overwork. In the Eastern Bloc the deployment of terror was on a vastly smaller scale, with party purges claiming dozens rather than thousands of lives. That said, 341 were hanged and about 13,000 sent to internment camps between 1957 and 1960 for their involvement in the Hungarian uprising of 1956. Furthermore, if terror was not ubiquitous, in all communist countries the secret police engaged in surveillance

of the population, helped by spies and informers drawn from the citizenry. Lithuania, fully incorporated into the Soviet Union from 1945, had a population of only 2.6 million, yet in 1951 it had almost 28,000 security agents and informants. In East Germany the Stasi had a staff of 91,000 plus an army of 174,000 informers to monitor a population of 16.7 million.[10] The fact that citizens knew they were under surveillance induced a general mood of caution—especially where contact with foreigners was concerned—and sometimes fear.

Communist parties were susceptible to factionalism which led from time to time to internecine struggles and purges. In the Bolshevik party the right of minorities to form factions was rescinded in 1921, which meant that subsequent oppositionists were seen as de facto disloyal. Debates over policy, moreover, invariably connected to issues of doctrine and thus raised questions about the orthodoxy of dissenters, fomenting charges of 'rightism', 'leftism', 'revisionism' and worse. The scurrilous charges against Kamenev, Zinoviev, Trotsky, and innumerable others are well known. In the 1950s conflicts within the CCP were less doctrinally based, sometimes rooted in pre-1949 networks based on army groups and base areas, differences that Mao Zedong was adept at manipulating. However, Mao was not averse to accusing his opponents of heresy, and he turned against both his designated heirs—Liu Shaoqi in 1968 (a 'traitor, renegade, and scab') and Lin Biao, who died in 1971 while fleeing to the Soviet Union. Hồ Chí Minh did not persecute opponents in the same implacable way, although he certainly knew of the liquidation of scores of Trotskyists, notably Ta Thu Thâu, in 1945. It is hard to believe he would have hurled abuse at Liang Shuming in 1953 in the way that Mao did (although no non-party intellectual in the Soviet Union would ever have dared demand a public apology from Stalin, as Liang did of Mao).

In liberal Western societies the sacrality that had once surrounded the monarchy had over the centuries been transferred to an impersonally conceived state that claimed to embody the common good. This was not a process that had advanced very much in societies where communist parties came to power, so party rule remained highly personalized. In the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea, the party leader was the object of a personality cult of baroque proportions. During the Cultural Revolution rituals of 'asking for instructions and reporting back each day' to Chairman Mao, of turning public spaces into 'red oceans', of daily singing 'Sailing the Seas, Depend on the Helmsman', of answering the telephone with the response 'Long Live Mao Zedong' were rife. Unlike tsars or Sons of Heaven, however, communist rulers lacked a transcendental source of legitimation, and thus strove to make good their claim to represent the 'people' through a panoply of mass media and staged spectacles.

At every level of the party-state hierarchy authority was highly personalized, with strong leaders more influential than formal institutions. In the Soviet Union 'bosses' (*nachal'niki*) dominated provincial and regional levels of the party-state administration and developed clientelist networks to consolidate their power and fend off interference from outsiders. This reliance on instrumental-personal ties reached its apogee in Central Asia under Leonid Brezhnev, where party leaders sat atop vast networks of patronage based on kinship and place of origin. In 1988, the First Secretary of the Communist

Party of Uzbekistan, I. B. Usmankhodzhaev, was put on trial for an elaborate scam in which party officials and industrial managers reported to Moscow that planned targets for cotton production had been achieved and then divided among themselves the difference between payment received from the All-Union funds for plan fulfilment and the cost of the actual amount of cotton produced. In China, where peasants constituted almost the entirety of local officials and a majority of middle-ranking officials, there was an equally dense culture of 'connections' (*guanxi*) which individuals used to circumvent formal regulations. In China, as in the Soviet Union, people at all levels depended on their *lingdao* (leader); and even lowly *lingdao*, such as workshop managers or village team leaders, exercised extensive and unaccountable power. Those dependent on them sought access to scarce goods, housing, or promotion in their jobs, by demonstrating loyalty to patrons of various kinds, often on the basis of kinship or native place ties.

Analysts debate the extent to which communist politics is best construed as 'neo-traditional', i.e. reflecting cultural norms and practices, or as modern. Phenomena such as personalized rule, court politics, petitioning, and clientelism appear to support the former view. By contrast, the modern character of communist politics appears to be evinced by the mobilization of citizens in support of state goals through campaigns, trades unions, youth leagues, or women's association; by the pervasiveness of propaganda and mass media; by surveillance of the population; and, as communist regimes matured, by reliance on forms of governmentality that encouraged individuals to regulate their own behaviour through social practices not necessarily centred on the state.

Modern society depends on bureaucracy, whose essence Max Weber saw as lying in functional specialization, impersonal rules, trained officials, and clearly defined lines of authority. Communist state and party structures were massively bureaucratized, not least because the state took over many functions that in capitalist societies are carried out through the market. In the Soviet Union in late 1920, 5.8 million people were employed in soviet organs, vastly more than were employed in industry at that time. From the first, the Bolsheviks wrestled with what they called 'bureaucracy', although in truth the problem was not so much bureaucracy as bureaucratism: the proliferation of offices, endless red tape, buck passing, deference to superiors, and abuse of office. Marxist ideology provided few tools for understanding these phenomena (in the 1920s, Bukharin read Max Weber in an attempt to gain some insight into the process). Usually, the Bolsheviks tried to explain them by reference to the pernicious legacy of tsarism and the fact that 'alien class elements' supposedly staffed the organs of administration. Yet the worst abuses were often committed by persons of unimpeachably lower-class origin. In 1919 and 1920, the Commissariat of State Control was inundated with complaints about corruption and illegality by officials in local soviets, and Cheka reports provide hair-raising accounts of bribery, profiteering, embezzlement, violence, and drunkenness. With remarkable speed a new word appeared—*komchvanstvo*, 'communist arrogance'—to describe the airs put on by the new breed of officials. In the light of this, it is no surprise that in his last years, Lenin became increasingly sombre: 'We are being sucked into a foul, bureaucratic swamp,' he observed.[11]

There was no sterner critic of bureaucracy than Stalin himself, and throughout the 1930s he instigated regular campaigns in which workers were exhorted to struggle against bureaucratism, the supposition being that grass-roots campaigns would shake industrial managers and state and party officials out of their lethargy. Some historians have gone so far as to suggest that the terror of 1937–8 was instigated by Stalin's concern to ensure that state and party structures did not calcify into a new order of privilege. However, it was in China, from the early 1960s, that the struggle against bureaucracy took on its most outlandish form, as Mao Zedong became convinced that a 'state bourgeoisie' now ruled the Soviet Union and that in China, too, 'higher officials' (*gaoji ganbu*) threatened to take China towards the restoration of capitalism. Already by 1962, 2 million cadres had been sent down to the countryside (*xiafang*), usually for one month a year, to be 're-educated' by the peasants. But this did little to change the culture of bureaucracy. And so spectacularly, in 1966, in a bid to eliminate what he perceived to be a mortal threat to the revolution, Mao launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The invitation to Red Guards and workers to attack 'those in power taking the capitalist road' massively destabilized the structures of power: by 1968, some 70 to 90 per cent of cadres in central ministries had been 'struggled against' and sent for reeducation to the countryside. The mass movement against capitalist roaders quickly descended into violent factionalism. In June 1967, for example, two members of the Central Cultural Revolution group, the body that had displaced the Standing Committee of the Politburo as the key centre of power, were kidnapped in Wuhan by a 'conservative' mass organization known as the Million Heroes. This prompted the People's Liberation Army to intervene, resulting in a loss of 600 lives and 66,000 casualties. The Cultural Revolution was an event without parallel in any other communist state. But the fact that the supreme leader of the party could set in train a revolutionary movement that came close to destroying the very foundations of the party-state reminds us how careful we must be when seeking to generalize about politics in communist regimes.

If the ubiquity of the phenomena lumped together as 'bureaucracy' suggests that communist political systems shared many structural features, it is also clear that culturally specific norms and dispositions shaped political behaviour. In China and Vietnam, Confucian notions of the state as an agency whose function was to promote harmonious order by improving the moral conduct of its citizens influenced official policies. Officials were expected to endeavour to ensure the correct thinking and ethical training of the masses through remorseless propaganda and mass campaigns. In both countries party leaders largely renounced the physical elimination of supposed oppositionists, which had been such a feature of the Stalinist system, emphasizing instead 'thought reform' of intellectuals—a process that was by no means free of psychological and physical violence. Whereas the policing of dissent was left to the tender mercies of the NKVD in the Eastern Bloc, in China and Vietnam it was carried out with the active involvement of the masses, who were called on to unmask the class enemies in their midst.

The Economy

With the exception of East Germany and Czechoslovakia, communist parties came to power in agrarian countries where at least three-quarters of the population farmed the land, where agriculture was technically backward, where land distribution was extremely unequal (more so in Vietnam, for example, than in China), and where poverty was endemic. Land reform was a key means used by communist parties to win peasant support. In Russia peasants spontaneously expropriated the landlords in 1917–18, leaving the Bolshevik government to cheer them on. The effect was to reduce the number of wealthy and very poor households and to strengthen the ranks of middling smallholders. A byproduct of carving up the minority of capitalist estates and consolidated farms was to reduce overall productivity. In East Asia communist parties themselves carried out land reform, in a process that aimed not only to break the power of rural elites and redistribute resources to the poor but also to classify rural households according to official class categories. In China in the course of the land reform peasants were mobilized through struggle meetings and at least 1 million landlords lost their lives. By summer 1952, about 43 per cent of cultivated land had been redistributed to about 60 per cent of the rural population. Poor peasants substantially increased their holdings, yet middle peasants were the biggest winners, since they started out from a stronger position. The class labels assigned to families in this process were to shape life chances for the next thirty years. In North Vietnam land reform (1953–6) was also violent—between 3,000 and 15,000 landlords were killed—and never as popular as in the PRC (where it was by no means universally welcomed). In 1957–8, the Vietnamese leadership rectified many 'excesses' that had been committed during the reform. In North Korea land reform (1946) proved to be more peaceful yet provoked greater opposition from families of dominant lineages: over 100,000 fled South, just as thousands of farmers fled from East to West Germany when private farms were grouped into vast cooperatives from 1958 to 1960.

Insofar as land redistribution strengthened private property, it was incompatible with the long-term goal of communism. However, the normally rapid move to collectivization of agriculture was motivated less by ideology than by the need to feed a rapidly growing urban population, to boost food production, and to squeeze a surplus from the rural population to finance industrialization. In 1928, faced by food shortages in the city and by a peasantry reluctant to sell grain at fixed prices, the Stalin regime resolved to step up collectivization. Over the winter of 1929–30, it was implemented at breakneck pace, involving violence, fines, taxes, and deportation. Central to the collectivization process was the 'liquidation of kulaks as a class'. Such was the force of the onslaught that in the course of 1930 alone, more than 2 million peasants engaged in 13,754 acts of collective resistance. The consequence of punitive levels of grain procurement, administrative chaos, and a poor harvest in 1931 was the devastating famine that struck Ukraine and Kazakhstan in 1932–3. In total, deaths directly resulting from 'dekulakization' and

famine may have been as a high as 8.5 million. Only from the late 1950s did rural life improve as the Khrushchev government raised the prices of agricultural produce, permitted an expansion of private plots, and provided a majority of kolkhozy with tractors or combine harvesters. In China collectivization was by no means as brutal, yet nearly all the forms of resistance that occurred in the Soviet Union, such as withdrawing from cooperatives, reducing levels of production or slaughtering livestock, took place on a smaller scale. Even before full-scale collectivization commenced in 1955, the gross extraction rate—state procurement plus exports as a share of domestic production—was already higher than in USSR (except for 1931). During the Great Leap Forward local cadres came under intense pressure to step up grain procurement and to 'overcome reactionary conservatism'. They exaggerated output, and on the basis of false reports of increased yields, central government ramped up procurement quotas. The appalling result was the worst famine in human history, when between 24 and 30 million died in 1959–61. In both the Soviet Union and the PRC these were 'man-made' famines, the unintended consequences of reckless and inhuman policies.

Despite its own disastrous experience, the Soviet Union pressed collectivization on to many of its client states in the late 1940s, although by the late 1960s, it no longer attempted to do so in Cuba. This was not least because it recognized that collectivization was the optimal means to strengthen the state's capacity to extract a surplus from the countryside. Nowhere was it a popular policy. In North Vietnam collectivization began in 1955–7 but was never completely implemented: by 1960, 86 per cent of rural households were members of cooperatives, but they were of a lower-level type. In Eastern Europe collectivization disrupted peasants' lives far less violently than in the Soviet Union and China, although in Albania the semi-feudal chieftains (*bajraktar*) of the northern highlands were destroyed, along with blood feuds and patriarchal clans. In neighbouring Yugoslavia, collectivization was cancelled in 1952, and by the 1980s, 82 per cent of land was under the control of 2.6 million peasant families, the proportion of the population working on the land having fallen from 70 per cent in 1945 to 36 per cent in 1980. In Poland after 1957, Gomułka began to hand back land to small farmers, and in Hungary a mixed system of collective and private agriculture prevailed. Nowhere were peasants able positively to influence the political agenda, most communists seeing rural dwellers as a class destined to be swept away by history, but they did prove capable of thwarting policies through passive resistance. Even in China, where peasants were the bedrock of the revolution, there was no rise in rural incomes prior to the reform era in the 1980s, although agricultural output did manage to keep pace with a booming population. Even more than in the Soviet Union, peasants were prevented from moving to the cities by the system of household registration. Nevertheless the picture was not completely grim. Over time, the lives of peasants became more secure: mortality fell substantially and health and educational standards improved. In Cuba as a result of the literacy campaign of 1961 illiteracy fell from 23.6 per cent to 3.9 per cent.[12] Improved irrigation, use of fertilizers, technical innovation, and the expansion of communications all gradually made agriculture more productive.

All communist states built highly centralized command economies in which the main sectors were owned and controlled by the state and in which an all-embracing system of planning determined economic goals. In the Soviet Union the First Five-Year Plan (1928–32) saw a surge in iron and steel production, mining, metallurgy, and machine-building, and the creation of prestige projects such as the steel city of Magnitogorsk in Siberia and the hydroelectric dam at Dneprostroi. This drive—like the Great Leap Forward in China—took place in an atmosphere of utopian radicalism and military-style mass mobilization: 'There are no fortresses the Bolsheviks cannot storm.' In contrast to the Soviet Five-Year plan, the Great Leap Forward ostensibly lauded balanced development between rural and urban industry—'walking on two legs'—yet in reality heavy industry was an even greater investment priority than in the Soviet Union. Moreover, between 1964 and 1971 China invested massively in a military-industrial complex—the so-called 'third line'—in remote regions of the south-west and north-west out of fear that it would be attacked by the USA or the Soviet Union. Everywhere in the communist bloc rapid extensive growth entailed the unrestrained abuse of natural resources (water, forests, pollution of air, soil, water) and pollution on a scale that exceeded that of earlier phases of capitalist industrialization.

Any day, anywhere in the communist world, one could open a newspaper and find it stuffed, on the one hand, with articles trumpeting achievements in production; and, on the other, with criticisms of unresponsive planners, lax industrial managers, and inefficient workers. The command economy facilitated rapid growth, but it prioritized quantity over quality; engendered waste, shortages, and breakdowns; and forced managers to bypass official channels in order to meet supply and repair problems. The magnitude of the problems of managing complex economies from a single centre gave rise to bureaucratic distortions, such as *vedomstvennost'* (putting the interests of one's bureaucratic department first) and *mestnichestvo* (localism), and stirred endless debate about whether the branch of industry or the geographical region was the appropriate unit of economic organization. The best that can be said is that the command economy turned the Soviet Union into a military power capable of defeating Nazi Germany, since from 1936 there was a big increase in the production of military hardware. However, in the short term, the 'socialist offensive' led to dreadful privation for its citizens, as living standards were cut in order to sustain massive investment in industry and defence. In the 1950s, the Soviet economy moved beyond the phase of primitive socialist accumulation and began to catch up with those of the West, but it never came close to overtaking them, and from the mid-1970s, growth began to slow. Just as instrumental-personal ties articulated the bureaucratic structures of the party-state, so a 'second economy' existed in symbiosis with the structures of the planned economy. By the last decades of the Soviet Union, it is reckoned that the production of goods and services outside the state sector, on a semi-legal or illegal basis, accounted for some 40 per cent of economic activity.

For the ordinary consumer the reality was a 'shortage economy', i.e. an economy, in the words of János Kornai, of 'countless frustrations, thwarted purchasing intentions, queuing, forced substitution, searches for goods, and postponement of purchases in the

daily lives of consumers and producers'. In the Soviet Union rationing was never permanent, but in the PRC it lasted from 1953 to the mid-1980s. Queuing for basic consumer goods was normal, and led to millions of hours being wasted, mainly by women. An exhibition on the 'subsidy economy' era in Vietnam (1975–86) featured a rock with the name Mai Hai scratched on it, the rock that Hai had used to keep his place in countless queues for rice rations. To make things worse, the state-controlled system of distribution was hierarchical, privilege-based, and corrupt. A network of 'closed distribution' stores existed for the Soviet elite, and restaurants and cafeterias were reserved for members of trade unions and professional organizations. In most countries, a connection to a lowly shop assistant with access to scarce goods counted for more than savings in the bank. Adding to these frustrations was the fact that shop assistants in state stores were notoriously rude since customers did not have the option of taking their custom elsewhere. Nevertheless, in the late 1950s, communist governments, especially in Eastern Europe, did become more responsive to the needs of the consumer, advocating a 'rational' pattern of consumption centred on women and the domestic sphere. The hope was to navigate between a still strong commitment to asceticism and the vision of communism as a society of abundance, to create styles of dress, home furnishing, or product design that eschewed Western extravagance yet met the desire of consumers for choice and self-expression. The hope, too, was to improve the 'culture of trade' and elevate the taste of the consumer.

As communist economies matured, the task of economic reform became ever more urgent. By the 1960s, in a desire to overcome the rigidities of the command economy and to shift production from producer to consumer goods, governments in Eastern Europe began to experiment with market mechanisms. The Soviet economy, by now reliant on the import of Western technology in return for the export of raw materials, proved particularly resistant to reform (although there was experimentation with cybernetic modelling of the planned economy). Market-oriented reform went furthest in Hungary, where from 1968 enterprises were freed from quotas and inputs set by the planning authorities and encouraged to interact on the market with the aim of making a profit (although some prices continued to be fixed). In 1982, Hungary went so far as to legalize the 'second economy'. Generally, however, market disciplines remained weak in the Eastern Bloc. In East Germany Walter Ulbricht's reforms of 1963 led to enterprises being judged by profitability rather than by output, and to directors being given discretion over pay and bonuses. Nevertheless industrial managers complained that they faced pressure from workers to spend profits on higher wages rather than on improving productivity; planning officials complained that they were expected to fulfil plans but no longer had the means to do so; and the government complained that shutting down unprofitable plants or raising the price of consumer goods exacted too high a political price.

By the 1960s, a 'social contract' had come into existence in the Eastern Bloc, whereby the state promised health care, employment, education, pensions, and trade-union rights in return for political quiescence. By this time the improvement of the living standards of the population had risen up the political agenda. Khrushchev pledged to

give each family its own flat, instead of rooms in a shared *kommunalka*, and opportunities for vacations expanded, with increased ownership of dachas and access to beach holidays. The 1961 Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union committed the government to improving the prosperity and leisure of its citizens by boosting the production of vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, and other electrical goods. In the Soviet countryside requisitions of grain and restrictions on job mobility gradually ended and peasants gained entitlement to pensions, guaranteed wages, paid maternity leave, and a month's annual holiday. In Hungary the 'goulash communism' of János Kádár gave the country the reputation of being the 'merriest barrack in the socialist camp'. In East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, the supply and quality of consumer goods greatly improved, although by the later years of these regimes, citizens were well aware of the higher standards of living enjoyed by their Western neighbours. Gary Cross has called consumerism the '"ism" that won' in the twentieth century. Historians debate how far the relatively poorer performance of communist governments in meeting consumer aspirations was a factor bringing about their demise. In East Germany, for example, by the late 1980s, about 40 per cent of households had cars—higher than in any other country in the Eastern Bloc (in the Soviet Union the figure was about 10 per cent)—yet the ubiquitous 'Trabi' was a standing joke in West Germany. In China, mass consumption became an ideology and practice that served to legitimize the regime only in the 'reform' era, especially following the Tiananmen crisis of 1989. Since then, the country has seen the average household rapidly move from owning a bicycle and radio, to a television, refrigerator, and washing machine, and currently many look to car ownership as the next step.

Society and Culture

Many aspects of social and cultural transformation are discussed in the *Handbook*, so there is no need to anticipate these. It is, however, worth pointing out—against a still strong tendency to write the history of communism in terms of the policies and actions of party leaders—that the social sphere generated its own dynamics that shaped the evolution of these regimes in ways that were not always understood by political leaders. As communist societies matured, for example, changing demographic and family patterns, divisions between generations, the increasingly urban character of the population, rising educational standards, declining rates of upward social mobility, and the increased dependence on technocratic and scientific elites were all factors that came to shape the lineaments of the communist order often in ways entirely unanticipated by or invisible to party leaders.

Despite the claim to be building societies based on the most far-reaching forms of equality, hierarchies of privilege and status reemerged with astonishing speed. Communist parties could dispatch the old ruling classes with ruthless ease, expropriating their wealth and abolishing private ownership of the means of production, yet they

were far less able to prevent new forms of inequality. As early as 1922 the Bolsheviks established a *nomenklatura* system whereby the Central Committee appointed officials to key positions. Through this mechanism, a new elite emerged, consisting of party officials at *oblast'* level and above, senior state officials, directors of industrial enterprises and scientific institutions, and senior officers in the army and navy. Analysts disagree as to how far these groups constituted a social class, since it was one defined by tenancy of office, rather than by wealth or ownership of property. Nevertheless, although unable to bequeath office to its offspring, it was able to provide them with cultural capital and useful connections, and after 1944 Soviet law once again allowed the inheritance of private property. Separate from this elite were technical and artistic intellectuals, who were subject to censorship and state restriction but who often enjoyed social status and a degree of material comfort their counterparts in capitalist societies might envy. In China the *bianzhi* system, modelled on the *nomenklatura*, was established in the 1950s and classified party and state officials into nine categories (with status subtly indicated in such matters as the cut of the Mao suit). Clients of powerful officials who displayed loyalty and commitment might expect promotion through non-regular channels, a practice known as *tiba* (significantly, a term drawn from the lexicon of the imperial bureaucracy). The Cultural Revolution dealt a shattering blow to this elite, but did not eliminate 'special privileges', which might take the form of access to foreign films and forbidden books, or to university places for offspring. In North Korea hierarchies of social distinction proved far more rigid than in the USSR or China. A hereditary aristocratic elite survived until 1910, when the 500-year-old Choson dynasty was toppled by the Japanese, and the communist regime reconfigured a system of social classification that was essentially heredity: today it is estimated that North Korea's 23 million citizens are divided into a 'core class', 'wavering class', and 'hostile class', reckoned to be 28 per cent, 45 per cent, and 27 per cent respectively.[13] This is redolent of the distinctions that existed in imperial Korea between *yangban* (literary and martial classes), commoners, outcasts or slaves. Upward social mobility for workers and peasants, normally extensive in the first phase of communist development, also seems to have been much less in North Korea, and it is noteworthy that it is the one communist country ruled by a dynasty (with Kim Il Sung the 'eternal leader').

As children of the Enlightenment, the Bolsheviks sought to raise the cultural level of the masses, which essentially meant raising educational standards, disseminating scientific knowledge, and opposing religion and superstition. 'Culturedness', however, had a wide semantic reach and could denote anything from improving standards of health and hygiene, inculcating efficiency and punctuality, or internalizing the norms and aspirations of Soviet ideology. In 1921, following victory on the military and political fronts, Lenin declared that 'culture' was now the 'third front' of revolutionary activity. In his last writings, he invoked the concept of 'cultural revolution', by which he meant principally the propagation of literacy and solid work habits and the application of science and technology. Other Bolshevik leaders had a more grandiose vision, including Bukharin for whom cultural revolution meant nothing less than a 'revolution in human characteristics, in habits, feelings and desires, in way of life and culture', in effect the creation of a

'new soviet person'. This was a vision closer to that of Mao Zedong, who put particular emphasis on culture since he believed that it was in the realm of thought and values that the pernicious residues of 'feudalism' and 'capitalism' were reproduced. In his view, political and economic institutions might become socialist, yet people's consciousness could lag behind. With the Socialist Education Movement of 1963, work teams were sent into the villages to stir up 'class struggle' against traditional practices of rural life, such as mercenary marriage, spirit mediumship, fortune telling, gambling, and corruption. This adumbrated the attack on the 'four olds'—ideas, culture, customs, and habits—that became a devastating element in the Cultural Revolution.

In the Soviet Union in the 1920s there was a vibrant culture of experiment in education, but this came to an end in 1931 with a renewed emphasis on subject-based teaching and discipline in the classroom. It was a version of this model that was taken up by the Eastern Bloc regimes after 1945: in most countries the system of schooling was based on free or low-cost primary education for seven or eight years; commitment to polytechnicism; an exam-driven and tightly controlled curriculum; rote learning; a teacher-centred classroom; and the involvement of Octobrists and Young Pioneers in the classroom. The PRC initially adopted this system, but with the Great Leap Forward, Mao Zedong unveiled one of the most radical educational experiments of the twentieth century, prioritizing applied studies and an integration of manual labour with academic learning. Examinations were abolished—'the bourgeois method of "making one's way" and achieving individual fame, wealth, and position'—and a professor's exhortation to his students to read more was condemned by Mao on the grounds that 'to read too many books is harmful'. In Cuba, too, there was widespread educational experimentation, some of it drawn from Chinese experience, such as the emulation of labour models, the prioritization of practical over book learning, and military-style production brigades. After the Revolutionary Offensive (1968–70), however, Cuba settled back into a more liberal version of the Soviet model.

The extent to which the state intervened in the private lives of its citizens was variable. At one extreme were Yugoslavia and Hungary under Kádár, at the other were North Korea and the PRC, where from 1979 residence committees and the Women's Federation enforced the one-child policy with methods that extended to forced abortion and sterilization. Historians of East Germany and the Soviet Union have been innovative in conceptualizing the ways in which power saturated everyday life. The party-state created a complex of official knowledge, norms, orientations, and rules designed to shape the activity of the individual, while simultaneously seeking to elicit his or her support. From kindergarten to school, from army service to sports clubs, public identities were constituted through this discursive complex. Some historians contend that subjectivities were shaped so profoundly that there was no external standpoint from which they could reflect critically on themselves or the political order. Others argue that citizens acted more tactically within this complex, learning to speak the language of the regime in public, to demonstrate support when required, to appear to be good workers, to participate in official rituals. Essentially, this argument goes, citizens appropriated official discourse in ways that served personal interests and needs, always with a view to

maintaining spaces of autonomy among family and friends, in the kitchen or the dacha. Such perspectives blur a sharp distinction between state and society. Moreover, instead of dividing the population into supporters and opponents, they draw attention to the forms of accommodation and negotiation that were practised by most citizens, who were far from being passive objects of power. This does not mean that there were no active supporters or resisters of communist regimes. At one end of the spectrum were fierce Soviet patriots, such as the war veterans who cheered on Soviet military intervention in 1956 to bring 'ungrateful Hungarians' to their senses; at the other end were evangelical sects or dissident intellectuals fighting for freedom of expression and human rights. In between were the majority who might, in one moment, consider themselves good Soviet citizens, yet in the next feel very aggrieved as the shortages, abuses and petty restrictions that curtailed their daily lives. Mass resistance did occur, especially in the early years of communist rule—in East Germany in 1953, Hungary and Poland in 1956, Prague in 1968—but it was a relatively rare occurrence in communist regimes. In the Soviet Union collective resistance died down after 1932, although in 1962 a strike erupted in Novocherkassk against hikes in the price of meat and dairy products, which culminated in soldiers killing twenty-three and injuring sixty-nine people. But this was exceptional.

The position of women improved in communist societies even as those societies remained fundamentally patriarchal. Some historians castigate the limitations of the official vision of women's emancipation since it assumed that women would be liberated simply by becoming involved in wage work, and otherwise did little to help them cope with the tasks of childcare and domestic labour. Others take a more generous view, arguing that notwithstanding the limitations of communist policy, women's status in the family rose as they became independent wage earners, acquired education, and moved into sectors once firmly closed to them. In the years immediately after the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks attacked the patriarchal order with vigour, exhorting working-class and peasant women to become 'new socialist women' by casting off the shackles of family life and throwing themselves into socialist construction. The Bolsheviks recognized that for this to work the state would need to take over childcare and household labour, but progress towards this goal was limited in the conditions of civil war. During the 1920s, the Women's Department (*Zhenotdel*), though chronically underfunded, undertook campaigns against wage and hiring discrimination, layoffs of female workers, sexual harassment, alcoholism, and wife-beating. Yet the 1920s also witnessed a revival of more conservative attitudes to marriage and the family, as mothers abandoned by husbands looked to the state for support and as the number of children orphaned or abandoned by their parents rocketed. Under Stalin the emphasis in official policy shifted towards promoting motherhood and stable family life, a conservative shift signalled more generally by a limitation of the right to divorce, the criminalization of homosexuality in 1934, and a ban on abortion in 1936. Yet the rhetoric of gender equality was never jettisoned: images of women as workers and warriors continued to be disseminated, and the massive entry of women into the workforce during the 1930s put paid to the idea of the husband as the family breadwinner.

In China, under the Jiangxi Soviet in 1931 the CCP had advocated a radical policy of free-choice marriage, a right to divorce, bans on polygamy, the sale of women, and child marriage. Later, it played down the right to divorce and free-choice marriage, arguing that the key to women's emancipation lay in participation in the public sphere of work. How far this shift was forced on the party by the rural environment in which it operated, how far by the exigencies of war, and how far by a lack of will on the part of a male-dominated leadership remains moot. The Marriage Law of 1950 proclaimed the abolition of the traditional family system 'based on arbitrary and compulsory arrangements and the superiority of man over woman' and instituted a system based on 'the equal rights of both sexes, and on the protection of the lawful interests of women and children'. With collectivization the economic position of peasant women improved, although women did not earn work points on the same basis as men, and during the Great Leap Forward there were attempts to socialize housework, childcare, and cooking, although given the generalized privation these measures were not popular. During the Cultural Revolution stereotypical femininity (but not masculinity) became the object of revolutionary scrutiny, with 'iron girls' exalted in official propaganda. In south-eastern Europe communist modernization brought about a decline of the clan-based family and here as elsewhere fertility decreased. With the exception of Romania, which in 1966 banned abortion and contraception, women's access to contraception remained extremely limited and they were forced to rely on abortion to limit family size. In the Eastern Bloc, as elsewhere, the number of women in employment grew substantially, but they tended to be concentrated in agriculture, low-wage industrial and clerical jobs, health care or education. By the 1970s women comprised half of all university students in most parts of the Eastern Bloc. In all countries they got the vote, although not until 1958 in Albania, and came to make up around a quarter of parliamentary representatives, considerably more than in post-communist times.

Despite their claim to stand for the transcendence of the nation-state, communist governments did much to promote nation-building and national identity. The USSR was the largest and one of the most complex multi-ethnic states in the world—comprising in 1970 over 104 officially recognized nationalities, 22 of which consisted of more than one million people. The PRC, too, was a multi-ethnic state in which 56 nationalities were recognized, but non-Han peoples constituted only about 8 per cent of the population. During the 1920s, the Bolsheviks had swept away the traditional elites in the non-Russian regions and sought to create a social base for themselves by promoting ethnic minorities—mainly young, political committed males from humble backgrounds—to positions of leadership within the autonomous regions and republics of the Soviet Union. At the same time, they provided mass education in native languages and created native intelligentsias who were enjoined to develop a culture that was socialist in content but national in form. If Moscow supported national diversity as a principle, it showed little compunction in attacking elements of cultures (notably religious ones) that it deemed backward, as happened in Central Asia. Moreover, in the course of the Second World War, Stalin ordered the forcible deportation of non-Russian nationalities suspected of collaborating with the Nazis, such as the Chechens and Crimean Tatars.

Nevertheless the institutionalization of nationality as the ethno-territorial principle of a federal state structure, combined with its institutionalization as an ethno-cultural principle in individual citizenship (via the internal passport that was introduced in 1932), created conditions favourable to the creation of independent nation-states in the long term. Moreover, the centralization of economic power and the monopolization of political power in a unitary party dominated by a largely Slavic elite, together with the dominance of the Russian language in public life, more generally, did much to sharpen nationalist consciousness among non-Russians.

Conclusion

The history of communism cannot be understood except as a product of what Eric Hobsbawm called the 'Age of Catastrophe': the era of two world wars, fascist reaction, the Depression, and movements for national liberation from colonial rule. Some of the century's worst atrocities were committed by communist regimes, as Stalin's terror, the famine in China of 1959–62, or Pol Pot's laying waste to Cambodia testify. Communist states made relentless demands on their citizens, pressing them to make sacrifices for the future and to stifle impulses to self-expression. And they cynically exploited the idealism and courage of millions across the world who struggled to create a better future. Yet communist regimes also had achievements to their credit, bringing social security, rudimentary welfare, improved health care and education to people who had lacked these things under the old order. If these benefits also came to be enjoyed by those who lived in the developed capitalist world over the course of the twentieth century, in vast areas of the world, such as Latin America, Africa, parts of Asia and the Middle East, hundreds of millions of ordinary people fared badly by comparison with their counterparts in communist states. In addition, communist parties made a huge contribution to the defeat of fascism in East Asia and Europe (albeit one that was deeply tainted by the Soviet occupation of Poland and the Baltic in 1939–41) and gave a big boost to struggles for national liberation and racial equality. That said, the collapse of communism in 1989–91 revealed just how weak the social foundations of these regimes were—regimes that had seemed once to threaten to subjugate the 'free world'. This does not mandate a facile explanation of communist regimes as ones that were simply imposed on unwilling populations. There were a few states that enjoyed very little legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens (Poland in later years), yet there were others—mainly those that arose out of movements of popular mobilization and national liberation—that enjoyed significant popular support. In the last analysis, it was the inability of communist states to stay abreast economically in a world of post-Fordist production, conspicuous consumption, and global commodity chains that proved critical, although as we have seen, there were a myriad other factors that helped to bring them down. The task of historians remains to grapple with the diversity that existed alongside the uniformity, with the mutability that existed alongside the immobility of

communist regimes, with the contradictory reality of repressive and often criminal regimes that nevertheless had economic, social, military, and cultural achievements to their credit. In so doing, they should seek to avoid moralizing condemnation, on the one hand, and credulous apologetics, on the other.

Notes

1. My warm thanks to Karl Gerth, David Priestland, and Jonathan Waterlow, all of the University of Oxford, for their helpful comments on this introduction.
2. David Lane, *The End of Inequality? Class, Status, and Power under State Socialism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982); Marcel van der Linden, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2009).
3. On a technical matter. At a time when so much can be followed up on the Internet, authors were asked to keep footnote references to a minimum, restricting them as far as possible to sources of quotations and less accessible statistics. The major secondary sources on which authors rely are listed in the select bibliography at the end of each chapter.
4. <http://marxism.halkcephesi.net/Antonio%20Gramsci/1917/12/rev_against_capital.htm> (accessed 15 December 2012).
5. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_12.htm> (accessed 15 December 2012).
6. John Riddell (ed.), *Toward the United Front: Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International 1922* (Brill, 2012), 120.
7. Leon Trotsky, 'Our Political Tasks', <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1904/tasks/cho3.htm> (accessed 15 December 2012).
8. *Pravda*, 1 February 1959, 4–5.
9. <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm> (accessed 15 December 2012).
10. Amir Weiner and Aigi Rahi-Tamm, 'Getting to Know You: The Soviet Surveillance System, 1939–1957', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 13/1 (Winter 2012), 33.
11. V. I. Lenin, 'O perestroike raboty SNK, STO i malogo SNK', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 44 <http://leninism.su/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=999:o-perestrojke-raboty-snk-sto-i-malogo-snk&catid=83:tom-44&Itemid=53> (accessed 15 December 2012).
12. Claes Brundenius, 'Growth With Equity: The Cuban Experience (1959–1980)', *World Development*, 9/11–12 (1981), 1088.
13. *Daily Telegraph*, 6 June 2012.

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PART I

IDEOLOGY

CHAPTER 1

KARL MARX AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS ON COMMUNISM

PARESH CHATTOPADHYAY

Introduction

Although the representation of communism as an ideal society is at least as old as Plato, it was Marx and Engels who made communism famous as the projection of a society that could arise logically out of the internal contradictions of capitalism itself and as the outcome of a self-emancipatory proletarian revolution. They, of course, drew on the writings of their great predecessors, mainly Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and Robert Owen, the 'utopians', who had propagated the ideas of a post-capitalist society at a time when the working-class movement and the material conditions for the emancipation of the working class were underdeveloped.[1]

'Communism' appears in two different senses in the works of Marx and Engels. In the first sense, it is a theoretical expression. As Engels succinctly states: 'To the extent that it (communism) is theoretical, it is the theoretical expression of the place of the proletariat in the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the summation of the conditions of the emancipation of the proletariat' (Engels 1972:322). Shortly thereafter, in 1848, the *Communist Manifesto* echoed this: 'The theoretical principles of the communists . . . are only the general expressions of the real relations of the existing class struggle, of a historical movement that is going on before our eyes' (Marx and Engels 1966:70). In the second sense, communism refers to the society which is envisaged as arising from the demise of capital. 'The real movement which abolishes the present state of things', inaugurates a communist society which is also designated by Marx, alternatively and equivalently, as 'Socialism', the '(Re)union of Free Individuals', the 'Republic of Labour', the 'Cooperative Society', the 'Society of Free and Associated Producers', or simply (and frequently) the 'Association', a shortened version of the 'Associated Mode of Production' (AMP) as opposed to the capitalist mode of production' (CMP).[2] What follows is a portrait of this society after capital. The essay is divided into six short sections.

The first touches on the conditions that give rise to the new society, the next four deal, respectively, with the new mode of production, its ownership relation, exchange relations, and the relations of allocation and distribution. The final section discusses the place of the individual in the new society.

Conditions for Communism

The conditions for the rise of communism are not given by nature. Communism is a product of history. Hence it is important to emphasize the singularity of the conditions presumed to give rise to communism, not least because this issue is very often neglected. In an early article Marx wrote: 'Individuals build a new world from the historical achievements of their foundering world. They must themselves in the course of their development first produce the *material conditions* of a new society, and no effort of spirit or will can free them from this destiny.' (Marx 1972b:339; emphasis in original). Even with the strongest will and the greatest subjective effort, if the material conditions of production and the corresponding relations of circulation for a classless society do not exist in a latent form, 'all attempts to explode the society would be quixotism' (Marx 1953:77). As we read in an early text: 'If the material elements of a total revolution are absent (the existing forces of production and the formation of a revolutionary mass which revolts not only against certain conditions of the past society but against the old "production of life" itself and its foundation, the "total activity" on which it is based), then it does not matter at all for practical development that the *idea* of this revolution has already been formulated one hundred times' (Marx and Engels 1973:38–9; emphasis in original). The future society arises from the contradictions of the present society itself. The process is best understood by recalling two methodological principles, derived respectively from Spinoza and Hegel, which inform Marx's *Critique of Political Economy*. In his first manuscript for *Capital*, volume II, Marx completed Spinoza's famous saying 'all determination is negation' by adding 'and all negation is determination' (Marx 1988:216). Years earlier, in his 1844 Parisian manuscripts, while critically commenting on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Marx had observed that the latter's 'greatness' lay in the 'dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle' (Marx 1973a:575).[3] Marx shows how capital creates the material and subjective conditions of its own negation and, simultaneously, the elements of the new society that is destined to supersede it. The material conditions are a great increase in the productive forces, which are developed to a high degree. This is a 'necessary practical presupposition' because without this high level of development 'only *shortage* will be generalized and there will be a return of struggle around necessities and, with it, a return to the old misery' (Marx and Engels 1973:34–5). It is precisely capital's negative side which contributes to this positive outcome. 'The material and the spiritual conditions of the negation of wage labor and capital—themselves the negation of the earlier forms of unfree social production—are in turn the result of its [capital's] (own) process of production' (Marx 1953:635).

It is only capital which, by separating the producers from the conditions of production (which are their own creation) and by pursuing the path of production for production's sake (the logic of accumulation), creates independently of the will of the individual capitalists an abundance of material wealth and the socialization of labour and production which are the fundamental conditions for building the new society (Marx 1962:419). In his 1847 discourse to the workers Marx spoke of the big industries, free competition, and the world market as the 'positive side of capital' and added that 'without these relations of production neither the means of production—the material means for the liberation of the proletariat and for founding a new society—could be created, nor could the proletariat take the road to union or undertake the (necessary) development enabling it to revolutionize society and itself' (Marx 1973c:555).

In an early 1860s manuscript, referring to ten thousand miners killed in English coal mines in ten years, Marx observed (in his own English) 'Capitalist production is . . . most economical of *realized labour*, labour realized in commodities. It is a greater spendthrift than any other mode of production of man, of living labour—spendthrift not only of flesh and blood and muscles, but also of brains and nerves. It is in fact only with the greatest waste of individual development that the development of men is secured in those epochs of history which form the prelude to a socialist constitution of mankind' (Marx 1976b:327; emphasis in original).[4] This same passage, almost word for word, appears in a later manuscript, that of *Capital*, volume 3 (see Marx 1992:124–5). Marx argues that at a certain stage of capitalism's development its social relations of production turn into fetters on the further development of the forces of production, including the 'greatest productive force', the working class itself (Marx 1965a:135). This indicates that the old capitalist society has reached the limits of its development and that it is time for it to yield place to a new, higher social order, and this signals the beginning of the 'epoch of social revolution' (Marx 1980:100–1). 'The increasing unsuitability of the hitherto existing production relations of society for its productive development,' writes Marx, 'is expressed in sharp contradictions, crises, convulsions. The violent destruction of capital, not through the relations external to it, but as the condition of its self-preservation, is the most striking form in which the advice is given to it to be gone and give room to a higher state of social production' (Marx 1953:635; the passage beginning with 'the advice . . .' is in English in the manuscript). In a famous, often misunderstood text Marx emphasized: 'No social formation ever perishes before all the productive forces, which it is large enough to contain, have developed, and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions have been hatched within the womb of the old society itself. That is why humanity always sets itself only the task which it can solve, and the task itself only appears where the material conditions of its solution already exist or at least are in the process of formation' (Marx 1980:100–1).

So far as the subjective conditions of its own negation are concerned, two and a half decades later, in his polemic with Bakunin, Marx wrote: 'A radical social revolution is bound up with certain historical conditions of economic development. The latter are its preconditions. It is therefore only possible where, with capitalist development, the industrial proletariat occupies at least a significant position' (Marx 1973b:633). In other

words, in addition to the material conditions, a subjective—'spiritual'—condition was necessary and this, again, was provided by capital itself, which begat its own 'grave digger' in the form of the proletariat. It must be stressed that capitalist relations are not revolutionized within capitalism automatically, even with all the requisite material conditions prepared by capital itself. It is the proletariat's '*categorical imperative to overthrow all the relations* in which the individual is a degraded, enslaved, abandoned, despised being' (Marx 1966a:24; emphasis in original). It is the working class—the 'greatest productive force'—which is the active agent for eliminating capital and building communist society. Marx emphasizes that it is the 'proletariat' whose 'historical mission is to revolutionize the capitalist mode of production and to abolish classes' (Marx 1987:703). As their justification of this mission, Marx and Engels had already written more than four decades earlier: 'The conditions of existence of the proletariat subsume all the conditions of the present society which have reached a paroxysm of inhumanity. In the proletariat the human individual has lost him/her self, but has, at the same time, gained the theoretical consciousness of this loss. The proletariat feels itself constrained to revolt directly against this inhumanity. It is for these reasons that the proletariat can and must liberate itself. But it cannot liberate itself without abolishing its own conditions of existence. It cannot abolish its own conditions of existence without abolishing all the inhuman conditions of the present society which are subsumed in its own situation.' (Marx 1972a:38). The proletariat is the 'bad side' of the present society, and 'history moves by the bad side', as Marx reminded Proudhon in 1847 (Marx 1965a:89). About a year earlier, Marx and Engels had underlined that the 'consciousness of the necessity of a profound revolution, the communist revolution, arises from this class itself' (Marx 1973a:69). Indeed, 'the proletariat is either revolutionary or it is nothing', as Marx wrote to a friend many years later, in 1865. The proletarian revolution is an act of *self-emancipation*: 'The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves' (Marx 1964a:288). At the same time, since the proletariat was the lowest class in capitalist society, Marx and Engels stress that the emancipation of the proletariat signifies at the same time the emancipation of humanity itself.[5]

It is important to note the specificity of the proletarian revolution. As Marx and Engels underline, unlike the bourgeoisie which started to undermine the pre-capitalist relations of production long *before* attaining (political) domination, the proletariat must first have its own political power in order to *start* the transformation process (Marx and Engels 1966:68). From this point onwards begins the process of revolutionizing the bourgeois mode of production, and it continues till the whole existing mode of production is transformed. This is what Marx called the 'revolutionary transformation period' between capitalism and communism, dominated by working-class rule, which begins with the destruction of the existing bourgeois state machinery and installs proletarian rule, the 'rule of the immense majority in the interest of the immense majority'. Far from signifying the *victory* of the revolution, however, this constitutes only the 'first step' in the revolution (Marx 1964b:24; Marx and Engels 1966:76). It is during this prolonged 'transition period' that the whole CMP and therewith the whole bourgeois social order are superseded. Until capital totally disappears the workers do not cease

to be proletarians, and hence 'the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat', as Marx calls it, continues throughout the 'transition period', the period of preparation for the workers' self-emancipation. Marx characterizes this period as the 'prolonged birth pangs' within the womb of the capitalist society (Marx 1964b:17, 24).[6] At the end of the process, with the end of the CMP, wage labour also naturally disappears. The proletariat together with its political rule ceases to exist, leaving individuals as simple producers. Classes come to an end along with private property and the state, the embodiments of class domination and oppression. At this point, all political power will cease to exist since political power is the official expression of the antagonism in civil society (Marx 1965a:136). We read in the programmatic part of the *Communist Manifesto* that while all the instruments of production are 'centralized in the hands of the state . . . in the beginning', it is only 'in the course of development (that) class distinctions disappear, all production is concentrated in the hands of the associated individuals, (and) public power loses its political character. . . . The proletariat abolishes the old relations of production and thereby its own rule as a class' (Marx and Engels 1966:77). As Engels put it later: 'In place of the rule over persons, there will be administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The state will not be "abolished", it will pass away' (Engels 1962:262).

The Associated Mode of Production

The outcome of the workers' revolution is a communist society based on the AMP and corresponding relations of production. This is 'a (re)union' or an 'association' of 'free individuals'. The expression 'free individuals' here signifies individuals who are neither under personal dependence, as in slavery or serfdom, nor subject to material dependence as in commodity production (Marx 1953:75). The term '(re)union' or 'association' has a double sense: on the one hand, it contrasts with capitalism's separation of individual producers one from another; and on the other, it contrasts with the separation of producers as a whole from the conditions of production. Rather it denotes a voluntary, unmediated association of individuals as producers (who have now ceased to be proletarians), plus a union of the producers and their conditions of production. This 'union', the exact opposite of capitalism's *separation*, is not a constrained union, such as exists under slavery or serfdom, nor is it voluntary union such as might exist under 'natural communism' or in a small family enterprise. Rather it is built 'on the basis of the achievements of the capitalist era' (Marx 1987:683). Having ceased to be proletarians, labour loses its earlier meaning, for it is no longer commanded and enforced by an alien power on the labourer. Labour now is transformed into free and conscious *self-activity* exercised by the individual producer as a part of the free Association, directed towards the development of the individual's human essence. Thus in the new society we have the complete *de-alienation*—as opposed to capitalism's *alienation*—of individuals both in regard to their own kind and to their own material creations. As opposed to a hitherto

existing 'false community', which as an autonomous power confronted and subjected the singular individual, there is now a 'true community' whose members are universally developed social individuals subjecting their social relations to their own control (Marx 1932:536; 1953:593–4; 1987:109).

The Ownership Relation

For Marx, ownership relations are simply the juridical expression of relations of production, so that with a change in the relations of production ownership relations must necessarily change (Marx 1964b:14; 1980:100). Ownership, however, refers to the ownership of the means of production and means of labour. In all class societies this ownership has belonged to a small minority, excluding the great majority from real ownership. While in pre-capitalist societies the labouring people (mostly slaves and serfs and their like) were considered an integral part of the means of production, under capital wage and salary earners are completely separated from these means. In his sixth note book (1861–3) Marx calls this form of class ownership, which is not recognized by jurisprudence, 'ownership of a definite class' or 'private ownership of a part of society' (Marx 1956:9, 21).[7] This is analytically a distinct issue from the question of ownership by *individual* capitalists in their private capacity. Indeed within Marx's broad category of class ownership there could be different forms of private ownership. In modern jurisprudence private ownership refers to the ownership of means of production by an individual/household or by a business enterprise. Quite understandably, the substitution of *this* form of private ownership by 'public' (state) ownership is considered as the abolition of private ownership in the means of production. However, for Marx this is to confuse the form of ownership with the *relation* of ownership which, for him, is the juridical representation of the production relations of a society. For Marx, the capitalist ownership relation derives directly from the capitalist relations of production, and is defined by the producers' *separation* from the means of production. This ownership relation may take different *forms*, such as ownership of the individual capitalist or of 'associated capitalists' (joint stock company) or even of the state (Marx 1987:572; 2008:636).[8]

Thus state ownership of the means of production does not signify the end of 'private ownership of a part of society', namely, class ownership of the means of production, so long as the great majority, separated from the means of production, remain wage and salary earners. It simply signifies the end of the juridically recognized *individual* (including corporate) private ownership of the means of production. Indeed, the *Communist Manifesto* makes clear that the juridical elimination of *individual* private ownership of the means of production, and their concentration under the ownership of the proletarian political power, is only a *beginning* measure of the revolution (Marx and Engels 1966:76). And since the installation of workers' political power does not entail the immediate disappearance of capital as a relation of production, proletarian state ownership does not mean the end of 'class private ownership' in the means of production. As

Marx stresses, a society cannot simply 'jump over' or 'enact away' its natural phases of development (Marx 1987:67). 'Class private ownership' will disappear only with the disappearance of capitalist relations themselves, along with the proletarian state. Capitalist private ownership of means of production—both in its individual and class sense—will then yield place to ownership by society as a whole, namely, social appropriation. As Marx and Engels stress, 'with the appropriation by the associated individuals of the totality of the productive forces, private ownership disappears' (Marx and Engels 1973:68). This appropriation, contrary to its earlier forms, which had a limited character, has now a universal character. This is partly because it reverses the situation in which the great majority were excluded from ownership of the means of production and partly because, given the universal character of the development of the productive forces attained under capital, the appropriation of the productive forces has also to be a universal appropriation by the collective body of the emancipated producers. And because the integral individual is a social individual, former private ownership is transformed into something akin to 'individual ownership' (Marx 1965b:1, 240). Almost paraphrasing the language of *Capital*, Marx observes in his discourse on the Paris Commune that 'it aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators. It wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production . . . into mere instruments of free and associated labour. . . . This is communism' (Marx 1971:75).

Exchange Relations

Like the ownership relation, exchange relations also change following the transformation of social relations of production. As in earlier societies the two types of exchange carried on by humans, namely, material exchange with nature and social exchange among themselves, continue to operate in communism. As regards the material exchange of individuals with nature, the CMP compared with earlier modes of production renders humans less dependent on nature by progressively subjecting it to human intelligence through an unprecedented increase in the material forces of production; its technology, at the same time, seriously damages the natural environment by undermining the natural powers of the earth along with those of the human producer, the twin fountains of all wealth (Marx 1953:597; 1987:477; 1992:753; 1976b:327). Under the AMP social individuals not only free themselves from subjugation to nature's blind force through a rational regulation of their material exchanges with nature, but also carry on these exchanges in conditions 'most worthy of and in fullest conformity with their human nature' (Marx 1992:838).

Coming to exchange relations among individuals, it should be noted that in any society individual producers create useful objects for one another, so that exchange has a social character. However, in a society with generalized commodity production, where products from private labour are carried out in reciprocal independence, the social character of this process is not established directly. Rather it has to

be mediated by exchanging products as *commodities*. The social relations of individuals take the form of social relations of their products. Products dominate the producers and confront them as an independent power. Marx considers the whole process as a process of mystification and famously names it 'commodity fetishism' in *Capital*. In the Association the social, collective character of production is presupposed and therefore individual labour is directly social from the beginning. In place of the exchange of products which assume a value form, there is now 'free exchange of activities' among social individuals 'determined by collective social needs and aims' (Marx 1953:88). Under capital the social character of production is posited only *post festum*, only after the products are promoted to the rank of exchange value (Marx 1980:113). As Marx stresses in his 1857–8 manuscripts, in communism 'community is posited before production' and 'the individual's participation in the world of collective products is not mediated by independent labours or products of labour. It is mediated by the social conditions of production within which the individual's activity is inserted' (Marx 1953:89). Later, Engels observed that 'as soon as society takes possession of the means of production and employs them towards directly socialized production, the labour of everybody—however different its useful character—is from the beginning directly social labour. How much social labour is contained in a product could be known directly without going through a detour (of exchange value)' (Engels 1962:288).

Distribution/Allocation

Distribution in any society can be viewed both as the distribution of the conditions of production and as the distribution of products, with the former determining the latter. The distribution of the conditions of production includes the distribution of the material means of production and of labouring individuals across different branches of production. It is, in fact, the distribution of the total social labour time—dead as well as living—across the economy. Thus viewed, the distribution of the conditions of production is a 'moment of production' itself or an aspect of the mode of production itself (Marx 1953:20; 1964b:18; 1992:900). The regulation of production by a proper distribution of society's available labour time across different productive spheres is common to all societies. In general, there is an absolute need to economize society's global time for production not only in the interests of efficiency but also in order to release more time to allow individuals personal enjoyment and development. Thus 'all economy is finally reduced to the economy of time'. However, in a society based on conscious, collective production, the economy of time and the social distribution of time assume such a different character that they constitute the 'first economic law' of the society of associated producers (Marx 1953:89). Whereas under capital the distribution of society's labour time is mediated by the *value form* of the products of labour, the new society solves the problem in a 'conscious, controlled way' without the need for social relations to appear

as relations between things, as Marx explains in his 1868 letters to friends (in Marx and Engels 1972b:159, 185–6).

So far as the social allocation of available labour time is concerned, there are two particular situations that all economies face. The first concerns the replacement of the means of production that perish or wear out over a period. Whereas capitalism 'solves' this problem anarchically, the solution lies in 'continuous relative overproduction' of the means of production, possible only when society consciously controls and plans the process of its own reproduction, as in communism (Marx 2008:770). The second problem relates to the temporal lag between employment of resources and obtaining the use values from them. The lag is long in some lines of production and relatively short in others. This again is a situation independent of any specific mode of production. The problem of allocating resources to production lines with a longer time lag, compared with others with a shorter time lag, is 'solved' in the CMP *post festum* and at the cost of abiding disturbances, while in the AMP society will consciously calculate and plan in advance the necessary scale of operation and allocate the resources, that is, the total labour time, accordingly. Marx observes that from a purely objective point of view the necessity of such calculation increases with the growing social character of production, for example, in capitalism compared with simple commodity production. Given that communism is at a still higher scale of socialization and that it is a consciously planned economy, the necessity of such calculation—social bookkeeping—is even greater (Marx 2008:59, 304). Not only is the allocation of labour time between different lines of production effected in a different way under the AMP than under the CMP, the saving of the global labour time devoted to production takes on an altogether different character. In all class societies the minimization of global labour time leads to an increase in the non-labour time of the non-producing few. However, the CMP continuously strives to increase the *surplus labour time* of the workers, in other words the labour of the worker beyond her/his own needs, which the capitalist appropriates in the name of society. The surplus labour is the basis of society's free time and, simultaneously, the material basis of society's many-sided development. But whereas under capitalism, disposable time is converted into surplus time, leading ultimately to the crisis of overproduction and non-valorization of surplus labour, in the AMP the social appropriation of the conditions of production means that the distinction between necessary and surplus labour time loses its significance. For necessary labour time is now measured in terms of needs of the 'social individual', not in terms of the needs of valorization. Similarly, the increase in disposable time no longer signifies non-labour time for the few. It is disposable or free time for all 'social individuals', and society's free time now becomes the measure of society's wealth in a double sense. First, labour time produces more and more wealth due to the immense increase in the productive forces, which are unconstrained by earlier contradictions or by the enrichment of the few. Second, free time itself signifies wealth in an unusual sense because it means the enjoyment of different kinds of creation and because it means free activity which, unlike labour time, is not determined by any external finality that has to be satisfied as a natural necessity or as a social obligation. On the other hand, labour time itself, the basis of free time, now acquires a new significance. Labour

is now directly social, unmediated hierarchically or by the value form of the products of labour, and bereft of its earlier antagonistic form.

There is another important aspect of distribution under communism which concerns the division of the total social product between society's production and consumption needs as well as the distribution of the means of consumption among the 'social individuals'. As to the first problem, one part of the social product serves as common funds that include replacement and extension of society's productive apparatus as well as society's insurance and reserve funds against uncertainty. The rest serves as the means of collective consumption—mainly society's health and educational needs, and provision for those who are unable to work—and personal consumption (Marx 1964b:15–16; 1987:109).

As regards the mode of distribution of the means of consumption among individual producers, this follows from the way in which the conditions of production are distributed. As producers are (re)united with the conditions of production under communism, they are no longer sellers of their labour power, and the wage form of reward for their labour ceases. Now the producers receive from their own Association not a wage but some kind of token indicating the labour time that each individual has contributed to the total social labour time after deduction for the common funds. These tokens allow the producers to draw from the social stock of means of consumption an amount equivalent to their labour. Naturally, in the absence of commodity production these tokens are not money, they do not circulate (Marx 1964b:16; 1987:122; 2008:347).

In the initial phase of communist society, still afflicted with the birthmarks of the old order, the principle of equal exchange, that is, equivalent exchange of labour against labour of the same amount, cannot be avoided. 'Bourgeois right' still operates, albeit with a big difference. Whereas in the old society the principle of exchange of equivalents can exist *only as an average*—i.e. it cannot exist for each individual case, since it is unascertainable—under social appropriation the opposite is true. With directly social labour, the share of each producer in total social labour time is evident. Hence there is no contradiction between principle and practice. The unavoidable persistence of this 'bourgeois right' at the initial stage of the Association is wholly overcome only at a higher stage of the Association when all-round development of the 'social individual', along with the development of the productive forces, takes place and when all the springs of 'co-operative wealth' flow more fully. Only then will prevail the principle, 'from each according to one's ability to each according to one's needs' (Marx 1953:88; 1964b:16–17).

The Labouring Individual under Communism

In 1845 Marx defined his and Engels's 'new materialism' thus: 'The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society, the standpoint of the new materialism is the *human society*

or *social humanity*' (1998:21; emphasis added). Yet not much attention has been paid to their thinking on the situation of the individual under communism. Quite early Marx set the tone: '*all* emancipation is the *reduction* of the human world and relationships, to the *human individual her (him) self*' (1966b:53; emphasis in original). Later in a justly famous statement Marx and Engels affirmed that in the Association the 'free development of each' would be the 'condition for the free development of all' (1966:77). Engels later held: 'it is self-evident that society cannot liberate itself without liberating each individual' (1962:273). Marx particularly focuses on the situation of the producing individual in the Association:

> The relations of personal dependence . . . are the first social forms in the midst of which the human productivity develops (but) only in reduced proportions and in isolated places. Personal independence based on material dependence is the second great form within which is constituted a system of general social metabolism made of universal relations, faculties and needs. Free individuality based on the universal development of individuals and their domination of their common, social productivity as their (own) social power is the third stage. (1953:75).

Three stages here refer respectively to pre-capitalism, capitalism, and communism.

Here Marx makes a very important distinction between an individual's labour as such and an individual's labour as *self-activity*, a distinction which most of his readers leave aside. The neglect of this point leads to a wrong understanding of Marx's emphasis in some texts on the *abolition* of division of labour and of labour itself in the coming society. This position appears most explicitly in the *German Ideology* (1846). At first sight it looks strange. Even many Marxists are embarrassed by this seemingly 'utopian' idea. Let us look at the matter more closely. Basically, Marx stresses that labour as it has been practised by human individuals in society so far has been principally *involuntary*, at the service of others, commanded by others. This was palpably the case with individuals under 'personal dependence', as seen in slavery and serfdom (in their different forms). Under 'material dependence', namely with wage labour, this is less palpable but here too an individual's labour is imposed on the labourer by forces external to him. Labour under capital, as we saw earlier, remains alienated from the labourer. 'The labourer finds himself in the same relation to his product as to an alienated object. . . . In his labour the labourer does not affirm but negates himself. The labourer has the feeling of being himself only outside of labour and outside of himself in labour. His labour is not voluntarily given, it is imposed. It is *forced labour*' (Marx 1973a:514; emphasis in original). One year later, in 1845 in his critique of Friedrich List, Marx remarks that the labourer's activity is not a 'free manifestation of his human life, it is rather an alienation of his powers to capital'. Marx calls such activity 'labour' and writes that 'labour by nature is unfree, inhuman activity' and calls for the 'abolition of *labour*' (Marx 1972a:435–6; emphasis in manuscript). Indeed Marx cites Adam Smith's view that labour in history so far, including labour under capital, has been repulsive, appearing as sacrifice, as externally enforced labour and that non-labour is

freedom and luck (Marx 1953:505). As regards the existing division of labour, Marx underlines that the activity of the individual here is not voluntary. As soon as the labour begins to be divided, each labouring individual has a definite, exclusive circle of activity imposed on him from which s/he cannot escape (Marx and Engels 1973:33). Referring to the division of labour in capitalism, Marx says that this process affects not only the economic sphere but also other spheres, introducing everywhere the process of 'parcellization of the (labouring) individual'. Marx also calls such individuals 'details', that is, 'fragmented individuals'. Very pertinently, he cites what he calls the 'outcry' of Adam Smith's teacher Adam Ferguson 'We make a nation of helots (serfs in ancient Sparta), we have no free citizens' (1965b:896, 992; 1987:349, 463, 466). Hence the task of the 'communist revolution' is a question of abolishing existing 'labour' and the existing 'division of labour' (Marx and Engels 1973:69). This is the sense we get in Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875). Discussing the lower and the higher phases of communist society, Marx observes that the lower phase of the new society cannot completely get rid of the legacy of the mode of labour of the old society, including the division of labour, particularly that between mental and physical labour. Only the higher phase of the new society will completely transcend the narrow bourgeois horizon when labour will not simply be a means of life but will become life's first need; not all division of labour will be abolished but only the division of labour which 'puts the individual under its enslaving subordination', along with the opposition between mental and physical labour (Marx 1964b:17).

Earlier we discussed the relation between necessary and surplus labour time in the perspective of the AMP as opposed to the CMP. Now we focus on this distinction specifically from the perspective of the labouring individual. In all modes of production, necessary labour is what is required for preserving and reproducing labour power, while surplus labour is labour beyond necessary labour, whose product takes the form of surplus value in capitalism. Once the capitalist form of production disappears, a part of total human activity still remains necessary in the earlier sense of preserving and reproducing the labour power of the individual labourer through the provisions for collective and individual consumption—including food, housing, health, and education. However, in contrast to capitalism the domain of necessary labour is much further extended in conformity with the requirements of the total development of the individual, subject only to the limit set by society's productive powers. The labour beyond this necessary labour—the surplus labour, which under capitalism used to serve mainly capital accumulation—disappears.

On the other hand, a part of what is considered under capitalism as surplus labour, the part which today serves as reserve and accumulation funds, would, in the absence of capital, be counted as necessary labour for insurance and reserve funds. It would also be counted as the continuing enlarged reproduction of the means of production, keeping pace no longer with the requirements of *capital accumulation*, but with the requirements of the growing social needs of the associated individuals, including provision for those not in a position to work. So the entire labour devoted to material production is counted as necessary labour under communism. The time beyond this necessary labour time required for material production is free time, disposable

time for enjoying the products and for free activity. In a justly famous passage Marx observes:

> The kingdom of freedom begins where the labour determined by necessity and external expediency ceases. It lies therefore in the nature of things beyond the sphere of material production properly speaking. Just as the savage has to wrestle with nature in order to satisfy his needs, to preserve his life and to reproduce, the civilized person also must do the same in all social forms and under all possible modes of production. With his development increases this kingdom of natural necessity because his needs increase, but at the same time the productive powers increase to satisfy them. . . . (Only) beyond this begins the development of human powers as an end in itself, the true freedom, which, however, can bloom only on the basis of the other kingdom, that of necessity (1992:838).[9]

It is important to note that Engels, while treating the relation between freedom and necessity with regard to communism, as opposed to earlier class societies, comes to a conclusion somewhat different from Marx's. For Engels communism constitutes 'humanity's leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom' (1962:264).

Even the non-disposable or necessary labour time in communism has a qualitatively different character from the necessary labour time in a class society, inasmuch as this time is not imposed by an alien power but is willingly undertaken by the associated producers as self-activity, as self-affirmation.[10] It seems that when Marx was speaking of labour not only as a means of life, but as life's first need in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, and earlier in his inaugural address to the First International (1864), distinguishing between labour in the past and 'associated labour plying its toil with a willing hand, a ready mind and a joyous heart', he was precisely referring to 'necessary labour' in communism in the sphere of material production. As regards the necessary labour time dedicated to material production itself, under communism the continuous development of productive forces at a high rate, helped by advancing science and technology, would allow a continuous decrease of necessary labour time and a corresponding increase of disposable, that is, free time for every individual. 'True wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals. It is no more the labour time but the disposable time which is the measure of wealth. Labour time as the measure of wealth assumes wealth is founded on poverty. . . . It posits the whole time of an individual as labour time and thus degrades him to the position of simple labourer, subsumed under labour' (Marx 1953:596). Marx refers to the idea of the ancients that the aim of production is the human individual, and considers this as 'sublime' compared to the modern world where the aim of humans is production and the aim of production is wealth (and not the human individual). Then Marx adds:

> Once the limited bourgeois form disappears, wealth appears as nothing but the universality of needs, of capacities, of enjoyments, productive powers of the individual, the absolute elaboration of the individual's creative aptitudes with no

> other presupposition but the previous historical development which makes an end in itself the totality of development of all human powers as such, not measured by a standard previously set; the individual is not reproduced according to a particular determinacy, but creates her (his) totality. In bourgeois economy, and the corresponding epoch of production, this complete elaboration of human interiority appears as complete emptiness. (1953:387)

In consonance with the three-stage analysis of the situation of the individual given above, Marx discusses (in English) the changing relation through time of what he calls the 'Man of Labour' and the 'Means of Labour' in his 1865 discourse to the workers of the International: the 'original union', then its 'decomposition', and finally 'the restoration of the original union in a new historical form' (Marx 1988:412). Here the last form refers to communism, where through the appropriation of the 'means of labour' by the collective body of the freely associated individuals, the 'reunion' takes place. Once this reunion is established, the human individual ceases to be personally or materially dependent, to exist as an alienated, parcellized, fragmented individual, and becomes a 'totally developed', 'integral' individual. This 'free individuality' signifies the 'real appropriation of the human essence by the human for the human, a conscious return to the human essence, conserving all the wealth of previous development' (Marx 1973a:536). With this begins humanity's real history, leaving, in Marx's celebrated phrase, 'the pre-history of human society' behind (1980:101). Communism is thus the beginning, not the end, of human history.

Notes

1. Readers should know that though the modern projection of communism considered as a society succeeding capital(ism) is the joint theoretical product of both Marx and Engels, the share of Marx in this endeavour, according to Engels's own affirmation, is overwhelmingly the greater. Hence most of the textual references in this paper relate to Marx's own works, though Engels's texts also will be recalled whenever relevant. In addition, following Marx's practice, the term 'capital' will mostly be used instead of 'capitalism', and, again following Marx's usage, the future society will often be termed the 'Association'.
2. Contrary to a widespread but incorrect idea on the left, Marx considered 'socialism' as just another name for communism, and not a particular stage leading to the latter.
3. In the 'Afterword' to the second edition of *Capital*, volume 1, Marx underlined that as opposed to the 'mystified form' of the dialectic, 'in its rational form, the dialectic includes in its positive understanding of existing things at the same time their negation and their necessary downfall' (1987:709).
4. It is worth noting that in this passage referring to the society succeeding capital, Marx speaks not of 'communism' but of the 'socialist constitution of mankind', which only confirms that for him communism and socialism are simply equivalent expressions.
5. In his last programmatic pronouncement to the French workers Marx repeated the same idea, 'the emancipation of the producing class is that of all humanity without distinction of sex or race' (1965c:1, 538).

6. Referring to the Paris Commune (1871), identified by Marx as workers' rule, he affirmed that 'the superseding of economical conditions of the slavery of labour by the conditions of free and associated labour can only be the progressive work of time . . . in a long process of development of new conditions . . . through long struggles, through a series of historic processes' (1971:76, 156–157).
7. When the *Communist Manifesto* declares that the communists can sum up their theory in a single expression, 'abolition of private ownership', the latter is expressly used in the sense of 'disappearance of class property' (Marx and Engels 1966:71, 73). In his 'Address' on the Commune (1871) Marx said, 'the Commune intends to abolish that class—property which makes the labour of the many the wealth of the few, (1971:75).
8. As the last limit of centralization of capital, Marx even envisages in *Capital*'s French version, the existence, over the whole economy, of a single capital under a single ownership (1965b:1, 139). It is important to stress that Marx conceives the individual capitalist not necessarily as a private owner of capital, but as a 'functionary of capital', 'the real agent of capitalist production' earning 'wages of management' for exploiting labourers (1962:475; 1992:452, 460).
9. In his Parisian manuscripts Marx observed that 'communism' as 'perfect humanism' is the 'true solution of the struggle between existence and essence, objectification and self-affirmation, freedom and necessity, it is the solved enigma of history' (1973a:536).
10. In his 1865 lecture (in English) to the workers of the International, Marx declared: 'Time is the room of human development. A man who disposes of no free time, whose whole lifetime, apart from the mere physical interruptions of sleep, meals and so forth, is absorbed by labour for the capitalist, is less than a beast of burden. He is a mere machine for producing Foreign Wealth, broken in body and brutalized in mind' (1988:424).

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CHAPTER 2

LENIN AND BOLSHEVISM

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In 1938 the Soviet government issued what became one of the most influential textbooks of all time: *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) (Short Course)*. Joseph Stalin played a direct role in the creation of the *Short Course* not only by assuming overall editorial control but also by drafting crucial sections. The interpretive framework of the *Short Course* was built around the claim that Lenin had created a 'party of a new type, the party of Lenin, the *Bolshevik* party'. This party of a new type stood in vivid contrast to the older Social Democratic parties in Western Europe, which 'tolerated foes of Marxism, avowed opportunists, in their ranks and allowed them to corrupt and ruin the Second International'. The *Short Course* stressed that the party of a new type grows and becomes strong by relentlessly purging itself of 'the filth of opportunism'. Accordingly, the history of the Bolshevik Party is portrayed as a series of challenges, ruptures, splits, and purges. The 'fundamental and decisive part' in the creation of a party of a new type was played by Lenin. The interpretation found in the *Short Course* was informed by the Lenin cult and portrays the Bolshevik Party as largely a top-down, conscious creation of the great man. Exclusive attention is given to Lenin's polemics with various socialist foes and none at all to the immense positive inspiration he received from Western Social Democracy. Rupture and innovation is everything, continuity is hardly anything.[1]

The *Short Course* is no longer read today, but its 'party of a new type' framework remains the most influential approach to Bolshevik history, even in mainstream academic scholarship in the West. Of course, Western scholarship describes the contrast between old and new types of party in very different terms. Western Social Democracy is presented as a mass, democratic movement based on optimistic confidence in the workers, whereas Lenin's Bolshevism is presented as an elite conspiratorial party based on anxiety or even despair about the revolutionary inclinations of the workers. Western historians often trace the source of Lenin's outlook to Russian revolutionary populism, especially to such violent and amoral figures as Sergei Nechaev. Thus Lenin's roots in the Russian revolutionary tradition are used to strengthen the contrast with European

Social Democratic Marxism, often by invoking stereotypes about Europe's civilized modernity versus Russia's backward barbarity.

The various versions of the 'party of a new type' interpretation have many solid insights, but when we turn to Lenin's own writings we find a strange disconnect. Lenin never publically used the term or the concept in describing his goals or his accomplishments. Instead of focusing exclusively on party structure and institutions, he talked about Bolshevism as a movement based on a particular vision of Russia's revolution present and future. When he talked about the fundamental features of Bolshevism, he stressed not rupture and contrast, but rather continuity and loyalty to a European-wide 'revolutionary Social Democracy'. Even his hostility to 'opportunism' was taken from this source. When he turned against the established leaders of European Social Democracy after 1914, he motivated his attack by claiming that they, not he, had proved disloyal to a pre-war consensus.

These facts suggest a different approach that places Lenin and Bolshevism more accurately in the context of 'revolutionary Social Democracy', particularly as embodied in the writings of Karl Kautsky, a figure of immense influence in Russia. Lenin had strong roots in the Russian revolutionary tradition, but these roots can only be understood in terms of this tradition's own evolution towards Social Democracy. Bolshevism was not the brainchild of Lenin, despite his role as its chief ideologue and spokesman. In terms both of its organizational concept and its overall strategic orientation, Bolshevism was a Russian movement that tried to implant the perspectives of European 'revolutionary Social Democracy' into the inhospitable soil of absolutism. Lenin became its leader because he expressed the aspirations of this movement better than any other. As often, the creative attempt to import a foreign model led to unexpected originality.

Karl Kautsky and the SPD Model

The relationship between Bolshevism and Western Social Democracy is embodied in the figure of Karl Kautsky, the pre-eminent spokesman of 'revolutionary Social Democracy' during the two decades prior to World War I. During all this time, Russian Social Democrats and the Bolsheviks in particular, looked upon Kautsky as teacher and mentor. He undoubtedly played a greater role in the socialist education of ordinary Bolsheviks than any single Russian writer, including Lenin. In 1917 Lenin set out Kautsky's relation to Russian Bolshevism generously and accurately:

> Undoubtedly, an immeasurably larger number of Kautsky's works have been translated into Russian than into any other language… The Russian workers, by making in 1905 an unusually great and unprecedented demand for the best works of the best Social Democratic literature and editions of these works in quantities unheard of in other countries, rapidly transplanted, so to speak, the enormous experience of a neighbouring, more advanced country to the young soil of our proletarian movement.[2]

When people are inspired by a foreign political institution, direct contact is usually less significant than written expositions of an idealized model of the actual institution. So it was in the case of young Russian socialists in the 1890s who were inspired by the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD). Their understanding of the inner logic of the German party came primarily from Kautsky's *Erfurt Program*, written as a commentary on the party program adopted by the SPD at a party congress in Erfurt in 1891. German Social Democracy had just forced the German government to back down and rescind anti-socialist legislation that had essentially outlawed the party, so that the party's international prestige among socialists was particularly high. Kautsky's *Erfurt Program* remained the basic textbook for Russian Social Democrats until the 1920s.

Kautsky's understanding of the inner logic of Marx-based Social Democracy was summarized in the pithy formula 'Social Democracy is the merger of socialism and the worker movement.' This formula had very wide currency in international Social Democracy. The young Lenin described it as 'K. Kautsky's expression that reproduces the basic ideas of the *Communist Manifesto*'.[3] According to Marx and Engels, the proletariat had been given a mighty mission to take over state power and use it to institute socialism. This meant that only the workers themselves could carry out their own emancipation. But this huge task required a vast amount of preparation, since the workers had to understand and accept their mission and then had to organize themselves to be able to carry it out. As Marx put it, the workers need to be 'united by combination and led by knowledge'.[4] In turn, these twin tasks—organization and enlightenment—required political freedom if they were to be carried out at the mass level of society-wide classes.

The man who turned Marx's grand vision into practical politics was Ferdinand Lassalle. German Social Democracy revered Lassalle as the founder of their party, and he deserved the title primarily for one crucial political innovation: the permanent campaign. The mass political campaign was a relatively recent political tool, used only sporadically and in an ad hoc fashion, for example in order to repeal the British Corn Laws (a direct inspiration for Lassalle). Lassalle's idea was to use and expand campaign techniques of propaganda and agitation to spread the socialist message day in and day out:

> Organize yourselves as a Universal Union of German Workers for the purpose of a legal and peaceful but unwearying, unceasing agitation for the introduction of universal direct suffrage in every German state. Found and publish newspapers, to make this demand daily and to prove the reasons for it from the state of society. With the same funds circulate pamphlets for the same purpose. Pay agents out of the Union's funds to carry this insight into every corner of the country, to thrill the heart of every worker, every house-servant, every farm-labourer, with this cry. Indemnify out of the Union's funds all workers who have been injured or prosecuted for their activity. Repeat daily, unwearingly, the same thing, again the same thing, always the same thing.[5]

The permanent campaign became the most distinctive feature of the SPD, an institution fully deserving the label 'party of a new type'. In the two decades after the Erfurt congress, the German Social Democrats became the largest party in Germany and even in the world, with a prestige unmatched in international socialism. Its brilliant

political spokesmen (party leader August Bebel was considered one of the best orators in Europe), its impressive party congresses, its dazzling array of central and local newspapers, its inspiring rallies, and its wide range of cultural societies were all aimed at creating (in Vernon Lidtke's phrase) an 'alternative culture' based on proletarian class solidarity and hostility to the German establishment.[6]

The achievements of German Social Democracy were only possible because of the relative political freedom of the German empire. For this reason, Kautsky's *Erfurt Program* insisted on the primary importance of political freedoms for the proletariat:

> These freedoms [freedom of association, of assembly, of the press] have the greatest significance for the working class: they are among the conditions that make its life possible and to which it unconditionally owes its development. They are light and air for the proletariat; he who lets them wither or withholds them—he who keeps the proletariat from the struggle to win these freedoms and to extend them—that person is one of the proletariat's worst enemies.[7]

The idea that political freedoms were light and air for the proletariat became the underlying premise of Russian Social Democracy's basic political strategy. But what practical relevance could this idea have to scattered and isolated Russian activists such as Lenin who lived under the repressive absolutism of the tsar?

Through Suffering to Marx: Russian Populism and Social Democracy

Looking back in 1920, Lenin used a striking expression to describe the origin of Russian Social Democracy: Russia had suffered its way (*vystradat'*) to Marxism.[8] Lenin's phrase points to the overlooked process by which Russian Populists moved towards Social Democracy as a result of an internal evolution in the search for a viable revolutionary strategy in tsarist Russia. In the 1860s and 1870s the first wave of Russian socialist revolutionaries saw little that was attractive about political freedom. Such things as freedom of the press were an irrelevant luxury for the largely illiterate peasantry. It followed that the coming Russian revolution could not be merely a political one that would install liberal checks and guarantees, thereby handing power to an unpleasant new elite. By the end of the 1870s frustrating failures in making contact with the *narod* had persuaded many of the revolutionaries that the uncongenial task of a political revolution really was part of their job description. Paradoxically, the new interim goal of political freedom was the reason that these revolutionaries turned to terror as a method. Since the current lack of political freedom meant that a mass movement was not yet possible, the only way forward was for a 'handful of daring people' (the self-description of the terrorists) to force the autocratic government to make the necessary concessions. The new terrorist orientation had one spectacular success when Tsar Alexander II was assassinated by the

terrorist organization People's Will (*Narodnaia volia*) on 1 March 1881. Far from introducing political freedom, however, the government grew even more repressive.

The dilemma faced by the Russian regime was well explained in a manifesto written in 1887 by Alexander Ulyanov, Lenin's older brother, in order to justify another attempt on the life of the tsar. Ulyanov insisted that 'without freedom of speech, propaganda that is in any way effective is impossible'. In essence, Ulyanov had adopted the SPD strategy for achieving socialism. But this strategy could only be adopted after political freedom had been won. For the present, terror still seemed the only possible method of obtaining political freedom in the absence of political freedom. Ulyanov failed in his attempt to assassinate the tsar and was hanged on 8 May 1887. Much has been written about the psychological impact of his brother's execution on Lenin, but the political impact was equally important. Alexander's execution laid bare the impasse at which the Russian revolutionary tradition had arrived. The Social Democratic strategy of educating workers by mass campaigns was perceived as the only realistic way to get to socialism, but this strategy could not be applied without political freedom—and there seemed to be no way to obtain the requisite political freedom.

Just when the full extent of this dilemma began to sink in, Kautsky wrote the *Erfurt Program*, his textbook of the fundamentals of the Social Democratic outlook. Brooding over Kautsky's exposition, young Russian revolutionary socialists—among them Lenin—began to wonder whether perhaps some version of the SPD strategy could be used immediately in tsarist Russia as a way of achieving political freedom. A daring political goal began to seize people's minds, one that can be formulated as follows: 'Let us build an underground version of the SPD in order to overthrow the tsar and institute the political freedom needed for the application of the undiluted SPD model!' This became the battle-cry of Russian 'revolutionary Social Democracy'.

Iskra and the *Konspiratsiia* Underground

The SPD strategy required three things that were difficult to imagine in backward, repressive Russia. First, the goal of 'merging socialism with the worker movement' required a working class strong enough to fight back against capitalist owners and the government. Second, it required an illegal underground capable of emulating to some degree the techniques of agitation and propaganda pioneered by the SPD in order to bring the socialist message to the workers. Third, the dream of contributing to the revolutionary overthrow of the tsar required some sort of national political structure for Russian Social Democracy. For the next decade, efforts to fulfil these requirements were undertaken by a generation of mostly anonymous activists scattered throughout Russia. Lenin himself was a prominent member of this generation, but in no way did he direct this collective, trial-and-error search for solutions—indeed, he was inspired by it.

During the 1890s militant and organized worker protest began to have an impact even in absolutist Russia. A turning point were the strikes in Petersburg in 1896–7 that led the

tsarist government to promulgate factory protection legislation. The surprising discipline of the workers electrified the Russian public and greatly encouraged the young Social Democrats who had wagered on a home-grown Russian worker movement. In the words of the Bolshevik activist, M. Liadov, was it possible both 'to expand as much as possible the framework of a secret organization and, while preserving intact the *konspiratsiia* character of the [party] staff, connect it with a whole series of threads to the mass'?[9] *Konspiratsiia*, the term used by Liadov, is key to understanding the logic of the new underground. It does *not* mean 'conspiracy' (in Russian, *zagovor*). The old populist underground aimed at a successful conspiracy to overthrow tsarism because it assumed the police repression made any mass organization impossible. In contrast, *konspiratsiia included* mass organization. Although derived from the French word *conspiration, konspiratsiia* acquired the strongly contrasted meaning of all the practical rules of conduct needed to elude the police, while preserving the threads connecting the organization to a wider community. The Social Democratic undergrounders knew that their activities were only a pale imitation of the mighty SPD, but they were immensely proud that any sort of imitation was possible in tsarist Russia. The collective creation of the young activists was truly an underground of a new type, one that did not seek to carry out a *coup d'état* by means of a conspiracy, but rather to build a mass movement protected by the rules of *konspiratsiia*.

By the end of the 1890s, Social Democratic underground organizations existed in most major Russian cities. Russian Social Democracy then faced an existential choice. Should it continue to devote itself to providing staff support for local worker protest and to spreading the socialist message until such time as Russia obtained enough political freedom, de jure or de facto, for Social Democracy to operate openly? Or should it itself take on the responsibility of playing a major, perhaps even a leadership role in the revolutionary overthrow of the tsar? The current that rejected the possibility of an underground socialist party leading an anti-tsarist revolution was scornfully called 'economism' by its opponents. It was defeated not only by the polemical barrage unleashed by its opponents, but more importantly by a new wave of politicized worker unrest in 1901. These events gave a fresh impetus towards creating a nationwide political structure that could channel and magnify the impact of worker protest and widespread social discontent.

In late 1900 a group of émigrés committed to this ambitious goal came together to launch a Social Democratic newspaper entitled *Iskra* or *The Spark*. Half of *Iskra*'s editorial board came from the older generation (Georgii Plekhanov, Vera Zasulich, Pavel Akselrod) and half from the younger generation of activists with extensive experience inside Russia (Lenin, Iulii Martov, Aleksandr Potresov). The goal of the *Iskra* group was not only to make this newspaper a nationwide political voice for the Social Democratic underground, but also to use the newspaper as an organizing tool for a party congress that would create ongoing central institutions. Lenin wrote his famous *What Is To Be Done?* (1902) in his role as spokesman for this *Iskra* campaign. Basing themselves on a few abstract polemical formulae in *What Is To Be Done?*, Western scholars have made an alleged 'worry about workers' the heart of Lenin's outlook. All his views on the mission of the party, its structure, its political strategy, are said to derive from a disillusioned

pessimism about the innate reformism of the workers. According to this line of thought, Lenin's worry about workers is the source of the contrast between Bolshevism and European Social Democracy, the reason for the newness of the party of a new type. This interpretation is a profound distortion of Lenin's outlook and a barrier to any real understanding of the roots of world communism. Lenin certainly believed in the party's mission to bring the socialist message to the workers, but this was a belief he took over directly from European Social Democracy. In the context of the debates of the 1890s, the assertion that the Russian workers were capable of receiving and assimilating the Social Democratic message was itself a daringly optimist one. A brief review of the many *Iskra* articles Lenin wrote before, during, and after the writing of *What Is To Be Done?* reveals many passages such as the following:

> The main source that nourishes revolutionary Social Democracy is precisely this spirit of revolt in the worker masses that, despite the oppression and violence that surround the worker, breaks through from time to time in desperate outbursts. These outbursts awaken to purposive life the widest strata of workers crushed by need and darkness. They disseminate in them the spirit of a noble hatred of the oppressors and the enemies of freedom.[10]

When *What Is To Be Done?* is read as a whole, sentiments such as these clearly set the tone. Lenin's description of the perfect underground organization in *What Is To Be Done?* is an idealized version of the *konspiratsiia* underground that had been created by empirical trial and error. Lenin summarized this achievement and broadcast it back to the activists on the ground in heroic, inspirational form.[11]

In 1902 the three developments of the past decade—growth of the worker movement, creation of a viable *konspiratsiia* underground, preparations for a nationwide Social Democratic party—were moving together in a climactic development that would shake the foundations of tsarist Russia, or so it seemed to the enthusiastic members of the *Iskra* editorial board. In August 1903 the long-awaited Second Congress adopted a program that reflected *Iskra* orthodoxy, and set up a central committee and an official editorial board with membership that reflected the triumph of the *Iskra* standpoint. Unfortunately, things began to fall apart even during the Second Congress when a deep split developed within the *Iskra* group itself. Bitter polemics and organizational infighting followed for the next year. Although the labels 'Bolshevik' and 'Menshevik' were given to the contending groups during these squabbles, deep differences in outlook and political strategy only became evident during and after the 1905 revolution.

The Old Bolshevik Scenario

Although 'Old Bolshevism' was a term originally coined by Lenin for polemical purposes, it is a useful label for the pre-1917 phase of Bolshevism, when it was still primarily

a Russian solution to a Russian problem—albeit a problem whose terms were set by international 'revolutionary Social Democracy'. This problem was the role of the socialist proletariat in the hoped-for overthrow of tsarism and the achievement of political freedom in Russia. Bolshevism's solution came in the form of a heroic scenario that was both an idealized version of the revolution of 1905 and a template for the bigger and better 1905 that (so the Bolsheviks hoped) would finish off tsarism. Lenin coined a number of formulae to bring out various aspects of Bolshevik tactics: 'armed insurrection', 'provisional revolutionary government', 'proletarian hegemony', and 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletarian and peasantry'. All these slogans point to the same underlying scenario: the socialist proletariat creates a *narodnaia vlast'* that is capable of carrying out the *narodnaia revoliutsiia* 'to the end'.

Narodnaia vlast' can be directly translated as 'power of the people', but the connotations of the English equivalent are far from the Russian original. *Narod* means 'the people' as opposed to educated society (the dividing line between the two was exceptionally strong in Russian society at this time). A *vlast'* is the source of sovereign authority, the directive energy that drives the state and its institutions. The word is most familiar to us in the phrase *sovetskaia vlast'* or 'Soviet power'. For the Bolsheviks, *sovetskaia vlast'* was synonymous in practical terms with a *narodnaia vlast'*, that is, a *vlast'* whose class basis was the workers and peasants. The revolution envisioned by the Old Bolshevik scenario was expected to be *narodnaia*, that is, carried out by and in the interests of the *narod*. Since the *narod* included peasantry as well as workers, the upcoming revolution could not be a socialist one, according to Marxist theory. The revolution could therefore be described either as 'bourgeois' (emphasizing its limitations) or as 'democratic' (emphasizing its positive content). Bolshevism overwhelmingly stressed not the limitations but the positive content of the upcoming revolution whose task was envisioned as a vast democratic transformation of Russian society. The Bolsheviks wanted to ensure that the next revolution was carried out 'to the end' (*do kontsa*), a key phrase in Bolshevik rhetoric.

The actual engine of Russia's transformation would be a 'provisional revolutionary government', whose vast tasks were set out in an article by the young Stalin in August 1905:

> [The provisional revolutionary government] must disarm the dark forces, curb the enemies of the revolution so that they shall not be able to restore the tsarist autocracy. It must arm the people and help to carry the revolution through to the end. It must introduce freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, and so forth. It must abolish indirect taxes and introduce a progressive profits tax and progressive death duties. It must organize peasant committees which will settle the land question in the countryside. It must also disestablish the church and secularize education. . . .
>
> In addition to these general demands, the provisional government must also satisfy the class demands of the workers: freedom to strike and freedom of association, the eight-hour day, state insurance for workers, hygienic conditions of labour, establishment of 'labor exchanges', and so forth.

> In short, the provisional government must fully carry out our minimum program and immediately proceed to convene a popular Constituent Assembly which will give 'perpetual' legal force to the changes that will have taken place in social life.[12]

In the Old Bolshevik scenario, the Constituent Assembly comes *after* the provisional revolutionary government has carried out democratic revolutionary changes 'to the end'. The Constituent Assembly therefore represented the end point of the revolutionary period and the beginning of bourgeois class rule. The 'socialist proletariat' could no longer participate in a non-revolutionary capitalist government, although the 'democratic peasantry' would very probably dominate the government of the newly formed democratic republic.

The Old Bolshevik scenario contained a detailed picture of the internal dynamics of the *narodnaia vlast'* created by the revolution. To the proletariat was assigned the role of leader: 'we proletarians should not only take part in the present revolution, but also be at the head of it, guide it, and carry it out to the end'.[13] This role was incumbent on the proletariat, because, paradoxically, 'only the proletariat has shown itself capable—in the name of socialism—to provide an army of genuine fighters to resolve the task of the bourgeois emancipation of Russia'.[14] 'The peasantry cannot carry out an agrarian revolution without abolishing the old regime, the standing army and the bureaucracy, because all these are the most reliable mainstays of the landed property of the *pomeshchiki* [gentry estate-owners], bound to this system by thousands of ties.'[15]

According to Bolshevik logic, if the peasants could be relied on to push the revolution to the end, then the anti-tsarist liberals could be relied upon to do their best to halt the revolution long before it reached this point. For a variety of reasons—economic and social ties with the gentry landowners, fear of worker activism under conditions of full political freedom—the liberals wanted at most a constitutional monarchy and limited reforms. The fate of the revolution therefore depended on the question: who would play the role of leader, the proletariat or the liberals? And the answer to this question depended on another: who would the peasantry follow? The pressing political task of the Russian Social Democrats was therefore to fight the liberals to obtain the political loyalty of the peasants.

Critics of the Old Bolshevik scenario asked: could Marxism possibly sanction the idea of the socialist proletariat as leader of a bourgeois revolution? The Bolsheviks' affirmative answer is much less unorthodox than commonly thought. Even in Germany, the inability of the bourgeoisie to carry out the 'bourgeois revolution' to the end had been a long-accepted commonplace, with the result that the task of fighting for 'bourgeois' democratic reforms fell to the socialist proletariat. The orthodox credentials of the Old Bolshevik scenario for the Russian revolution were confirmed by a seminal 1906 article by Karl Kautsky entitled 'The Driving Forces of the Russian Revolution and its Prospects'. In this article Kautsky essentially endorsed the Bolshevik strategy of a peasant-proletarian revolutionary coalition led by the proletariat.[16]

The Bolsheviks also preserved their orthodoxy by assuming, along with Kautsky, that the upcoming Russian revolution could not be a socialist one, since the non-socialist

peasantry made up the vast majority of the country. Nevertheless, since the Russian revolution was taking place in an era of world socialist revolution, and since it would very likely inspire socialist revolution in Western Europe, neither Kautsky nor the Bolsheviks foresaw a tremendously long era of peaceful bourgeois development in Russia. Indeed, their hope was to make post-revolutionary Russia as unpeaceful as possible.

The actual revolution of 1905 had been a mighty upheaval and the revolution envisaged in the Old Bolshevik scenario was supposed to be even mightier. The reality of Russia in the years 1907–14 was in dire contrast to both the actual and projected revolution. On the one hand, renewed repression came close to killing the *konspiratsiia* underground. Underground organizations were devastated not only by arrests but also by spies and provocateurs, the 'flight of the intellectuals' from revolutionary activity, and the apathy of the workers. On the other hand, the post-revolutionary order seemed relatively stable and at least potentially open to legal worker organizations, thus raising the question of whether anti-tsarist revolution was still on the agenda.

Under these circumstances, Russian 'revolutionary Social Democracy' was faced with whether or not to 'liquidate' its earlier commitment to the *konspiratsiia* underground and to an anti-tsarist *narodnaia revoliutsiia*. Lenin insisted that the revolutionary goals of the party—summed up in slogans such as the democratic republic, confiscation of landowner estates, and the eight-hour working day—were still on the agenda, since post-revolutionary tsarist statesmen such as Pëtr Stolypin had only delayed, not defused, Russia's underlying crisis. The *konspiratsiia* underground must therefore be preserved as the only institution that kept alive the socialist message in Russia. Despite its present debilitude, it was sowing the seeds that would blossom in the upcoming revolutionary crisis.

Compared to the pre-1905 situation, the post-1905 underground suffered from a severe shortage of revolutionary *intelligenty* (educated people) who fulfilled all sorts of necessary functions. In response, the Bolsheviks made it a point of pride to recruit more workers to underground party committees as replacements. This response creates problems for the Western academic version of the 'party of a new type' interpretation, which asserts that a central feature of Bolshevism was an exaltation of the revolutionary intellectual over the unreliability of the workers. Looking at the full history of the Bolshevik-Menshevik split, we see that the Mensheviks had much greater intellectual credentials and prestige than the Bolsheviks and they charged the Bolsheviks with relying on demagogic appeals to the more untutored and backward workers. Probably the Bolshevik underground was indeed more authoritarian in its workings and ethos than the Mensheviks, but this seems to be more the result of a paucity than a plethora of intellectuals. Instead of the squabbling of 'petty-bourgeois intellectuals', Bolshevik activists preferred to accept the direction of their leaders (or so memoir evidence suggests).

Towards World Bolshevism

On 4 August 1914 the parliamentary delegation of the German SPD joined the bourgeois parties to vote funds in support of the German war effort. This vote was seen by many on the left, including Lenin, as a terrible betrayal of basic socialist principles. The sense of betrayal was compounded when the Social Democratic parties in other belligerent countries also supported their government rather than their class brothers and sisters in other countries. Lenin's party considered this shameful outcome to represent a victory of socialist opportunism over revolutionary Social Democracy on an international scale. Lenin, who had been happy to be a leader on a purely Russian scale and rarely spoke on wider issues, now saw himself as a guardian of the continuity of revolutionary Social Democracy, renamed 'communism'. Nevertheless, his post-1914 global vision had strong pre-war roots in the 'revolutionary Social Democracy' of the Second International. Indeed, he adopted a rhetorical stance of aggressive unoriginality and passionately insisted that he was only repeating the pre-war consensus of revolutionary Marxists. Yet from 1914 he insisted on a complete split within international socialism, on casting out the opportunists and creating a new International based on unadulterated 'revolutionary Social Democracy'.

A central reason for Lenin's insistence on a split with world socialism was his conviction that the outbreak of war had inaugurated a revolutionary era on a global scale. He made no secret about where he got his understanding of global revolutionary dynamics:

> It was none other than Kautsky himself, in a whole series of articles and in his book *Road to Power* (1909), who described with the fullest possible definiteness the basic traits of the approaching third epoch and who pointed out its radical distinctiveness from the second (yesterday's) epoch.[17]

Already in 1902 Kautsky had written that 'we must reckon on the possibility of a war within a perceptible time and therewith also the possibility of political convulsions that will end directly in proletarian uprisings or at least in opening the way toward them'. In 1909 he eloquently invoked the contours of the coming age of global revolution: 'Today, the battles in the liberation struggle of labouring and exploited humanity are being fought not only at the Spree River and the Seine, but also at the Hudson and Mississippi, at the Neva and the Dardanelles, at the Ganges and the Hoangho.'[18]

Particularly revealing are Kautsky's comments on colonial and national struggles, since they set forth the basic logic of the later policy of the Communist International. In 1909 he wrote that the anti-colonial rebels were often supporters of capitalism. 'This does not in any way alter the fact that they are weakening European capitalism and its governments and introducing an element of political unrest into the whole world.'[19]

While openly admitting his debt to Kautsky, Lenin coined the term *kautskianstvo* as a blanket label for the entire despised 'centre' tendency, which in his mind refused to match revolutionary words with deeds. His attacks against Kautsky personally became

almost obsessional, even as he peppered his writings with expressions of admiration for 'Kautsky when he was a Marxist' (that is, prior to 1914). Most of his longer works after 1914—including *Imperialism* (1916), *State and Revolution* (1917), *Renegade Kautsky and the Proletarian Revolution* (1918), and *Left-Wing Communism* (1920)—are structured to a large extent around the opposition of *kautskianstvo* versus 'Kautsky when he was a Marxist'.

One implication of Kautsky's scenario of global revolutionary interaction that became central to Lenin's outlook in the period 1914–17 was the dynamics of revolutionary contagion. In August 1915 he envisioned what might happen after a socialist revolution had occurred in a single country: 'the victorious proletariat [of one country] will rise up against the rest of the world—the capitalist world—attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries, stirring uprisings in those countries against the capitalists, and in case of need using even armed force against the exploiting classes and their states'.[20] Later in the same year, Lenin argued that a democratic revolution would have a similar inspirational effect. For example, a democratic revolution would 'raise up the socialist proletariat of Europe for an insurrection against their governments . . . There is no doubt that a victory of the proletariat in Russia would create extraordinarily favourable conditions for the development of the revolution in both Asia and Europe. *Even* 1905 proved that.' The implication for Russian Bolshevism was clear: 'The task confronting the proletariat of Russia is to carry out the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the end *in order to* kindle the socialist revolution in Europe' (Lenin's emphasis).[21] This expectation of revolutionary contagion was one of the justifications for the October revolution of 1917 as well as the founding of the Third or Communist International (Comintern) in March 1919.

Lenin and Bolshevism in 1917

The revolutionary year 1917 provides us with a dramatic case study of the relations between Bolshevism and its leader Lenin. The prevailing interpretation stresses discontinuity with Old Bolshevism and argues that Lenin's personal innovations were pushed through in the teeth of determined resistance from other Bolshevik leaders. In April 1917 (so the story goes), when Lenin returned from European emigration, he promptly announced a radically new orientation in his famous April Theses that shocked the rest of the party leadership who protested their loyalty to Old Bolshevism. In October, Lenin insisted on a hard-line policy in opposition to Bolshevik leaders such as Lev Kamenev, and thus is personally responsible for the timing of the October revolution and for such basic features of the new regime as the dissolution of the democratically elected Constituent Assembly and one-party dictatorship.

Against this picture of conflict and top-down innovation, we will sketch out another one that argues that Lenin was an effective leader because he worked with the Bolshevik consensus to a much greater extent than usually realized. Furthermore, major outcomes

were more the result of the objective dynamics of the situation than the conscious aim of any one leader, including Lenin.

In 1926 Vladimir Nevsky published the first substantial source-based history of Bolshevism. Nevsky's book appeared in the brief interval after primary sources had been collected but before the new Stalinist 'party of a new type' orthodoxy ended genuine historical debate. Nevsky wrote about the April Theses:

> We must stress that even in the ranks of our party were people who at first understood these theses incorrectly, taking them as a call to an immediate implementation of socialism, despite categorical explanations [to the contrary].
>
> In fact, Lenin's position [in the April Theses] was the natural development of the doctrine that he had worked out long ago in the previous periods of the history of our party, since one of the basic propositions of Bolshevism . . . was the one put forward already during the first Russian revolution [in 1905]: the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. This same idea also implied all the conclusions and all the measures inevitably arrived at, as soon as the party was convinced of the necessity and the inevitability of a proletarian-peasant dictatorship.[22]

Nevsky's explanation correctly stresses continuity between the Old Bolshevik scenario and revolutionary strategy in 1917. After the fall of tsarism in February, a Provisional Government was created that was dominated by liberal reformers. At the same time, workers and peasant soldiers formed a Soviet that had power in the streets but was neither organizationally nor psychologically prepared to declare itself the sole sovereign authority or *vlast'*. Bolshevik leaders in Petrograd during the first month after the revolution had to come up with a coherent response to these developments in the absence of Lenin, who was still stuck in Switzerland. They did so by applying the Old Bolshevik scenario to the situation that confronted them, insisting that 'the bourgeois-democratic revolution has not yet been completed'.

Many observers have misunderstood this assertion to imply that since the bourgeois revolution was not over, a bourgeois government such as the Provisional Government had to be accorded at least 'critical support'. With a greater knowledge of the Old Bolshevik scenario, we will see that the Old Bolshevik train of thought was rather the opposite: since the democratic revolution had not yet been carried out to the end, the bourgeois Provisional Government had to be replaced as quickly as possible with a *narodnaia vlast'* that would carry out a massive transformation of Russian society. Bolshevik leaders such as Kamenev and Stalin declared the Provisional Government was counter-revolutionary and as such would violently clash with the workers and peasants, that the government would be replaced by a *narodnaia vlast'* based on the Soviets, and therefore that socialist support of the Provisional Government, not to mention high-level participation in it, was impermissible. Thus even without Lenin's intervention in April, the Bolsheviks were set on the course that led to October.[23]

In early April, Lenin returned from exile in Switzerland and presented his April Theses. In order to grasp the contours of his new and refurbished version of Bolshevism, we need to look beyond the Theses to his pronouncements throughout

the year. Lenin himself later referred to his new vision as 'the idea of Soviet power [*sovetskaia vlast'*]'. Perhaps the best sources for understanding his vision are two works from autumn 1917 that present the idea of Soviet power in the potent form that actually influenced events in 1917: *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Deal with It* and *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* The core of the idea of Soviet power was the claim that a government based on the Soviets—that is, councils originally formed for purposes of direct class struggle, elected exclusively by workers and peasants—was the ideal form for the long-awaited dictatorship of the proletariat. Surrounding this central claim were a number of themes:

1. The Soviets were a higher form of democracy than an ordinary parliamentary system. Direct and continuous control from below would eliminate coercive bureaucracies that were independent of the population, thus allowing mass participation in state affairs.
2. The Soviets were the ideal vehicle of a *narodnaia vlast'*, that is, a government that based itself on the workers and peasants and excluded elite classes seen as 'counter-revolutionary'.
3. The Soviets were deemed to be the ideal vehicle for class leadership of the peasants by the workers.
4. Due to its class basis, the Soviet system could respond to the growing national crisis in Russia and elsewhere by adopting energetic policies that a government based on the elite classes could never implement, even though everybody acknowledged such measures were necessary.
5. Under these circumstances, pragmatically necessary measures of state regulation would also represent 'steps toward socialism'.

Lenin regarded his new argument about steps towards socialism as severely practical and realistic. His logic can be paraphrased as follows:

There exists today a number of specific concrete policies that 'could and should' be adopted, particularly in response to the national economic crisis. These measures are not socialist in and of themselves—in fact, many of them have already been adopted by imperialist governments, and they are now being advocated across the entire Russian political spectrum. But these same measures, when adopted and implemented with vigour by the proletariat, take on a different meaning. They point towards socialism, they prepare the way for genuine socialist transformation. The idea of steps towards socialism is not a blanket endorsement of Russia's readiness for socialism. There are many policies for which the time has not yet matured, but this does not diminish the fact that there are a number of available regulatory policies that are not only possible but necessary.

If we compare Lenin's 'idea of Soviet power' to the Old Bolshevik scenario, we will see much more continuity than discontinuity. Of the five themes listed above, numbers 2, 3, and 4 are direct expressions of the Old Bolshevik scenario, lightly adjusted to fit the circumstances of 1917: a *narodnaia vlast'*, in and through which the proletariat exercises class leadership of the peasantry, carrying out radical policies for the benefit of the

people. The other themes had not been included in the Old Bolshevik scenario, but this does not necessarily mean they were shocking or unacceptable to Bolshevik activists. These activists had always seen the Soviets as a vehicle for a *narodnaia vlast'*. What was new was the claim that the Soviets as a political form constituted an essentially different type of democracy in contrast to a parliamentary system, no matter how democratized. Similarly, Lenin's 'steps toward socialism' almost amounted to no more than this: we will advocate the policies we would have supported in any case, but we will call them 'steps toward socialism'.

The idea of Soviet power is most familiar today from Lenin's *State and Revolution*, which highlights the first of this complex of themes, namely, the claim to an unprecedentedly high level of democratism. Although *State and Revolution* was written in 1917, it was not published until 1918 and thus played no role in the events of 1917. This fact is symbolic of the relative unimportance of this particular theme in the further fate of the idea of Soviet power. Even in 1917 the heart of the Bolshevik message was based on the themes in the idea of Soviet power that had a direct connection to Old Bolshevism. The Bolsheviks in 1917 called for a *narodnaia vlast'* that would exclude the elite from power and for this very reason be able to respond effectively to the growing danger of complete economic and social collapse. Whether or not these policies were socialist or even 'steps toward socialism' was a relatively minor theme in actual Bolshevik propaganda during 1917.

Lenin shared a common strategic outlook with his Old Bolshevik critics: replace the liberal Provisional Government with a *narodnaia vlast'* based on the Soviets and dedicated to vast revolutionary change. Within this common strategic outlook, however, there was room for strong disagreement on a wide variety of tactical issues. How best to combat and discredit the Provisional Government? What appeals should be made to what group? What demonstrations and manifestations should be made at what time with what aims? Tactical issues of this kind created intense intra-Bolshevik debate throughout 1917. Disagreement among the Bolsheviks about the timing and execution of the October insurrection that established Soviet power was just such a debate. These dramatic debates are worthy of the attention accorded them by historians. Looking at 1917 as a whole, however, the emphasis should be not on Bolshevik tactical divisions but on the party's relative strategic unity. The debates and fissures within the party pale in comparison to the internal struggles of the other socialist parties. The Menshevik and the Socialist Revolutionary parties both split down the middle over the fundamental strategic orientation of whether or not to replace the Provisional Government and the class coalition behind it with some sort of *narodnaia vlast'*. Only the Bolshevik Party was united from the start on this fundamental question, giving it an enormous advantage in the political dynamics of 1917.

As Martov later put it, the end result of the October revolution was not a genuine *vlast' sovetov* (power of the Soviets) but rather a *sovetskaia vlast'* (Soviet power), that is, 'the open or hidden replacement of the "*vlast'* of the Soviets" by a *vlast'* of a specific party that gradually turned into a state institution and the crucial pivot of the Soviet republic'.[24] The origins of this form of state in democratic Soviets became only a historical curiosity.

Many historians trace this outcome directly to Lenin's insistence on one-party rule and to personal decisions such as the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. Those who see these non-democratic outcomes as the more or less inevitable result of much larger social forces—particularly the collapse of basic social coordinating institutions and brutal social polarization—will be less inclined to give Lenin's individual decisions such causal weight.

Close examination of the political dynamics of 1917 impels us to put Bolshevism back into the Bolshevik revolution. The historical emphasis should be on leader and movement working in productive interaction rather than on conflict and disunity. Of course, Lenin's return in April 1917 was a turning point in Russia's political evolution. He was the first leader of national stature to attack the prevailing socialist strategy of *soglashenie*, or cooperation with the 'bourgeois' Provisional Government. Thereafter he became a strong leader of a unified party. But the party did not have unity because Lenin was a strong leader—Lenin was a strong leader because he led a unified party. And the party was not unified around a radical new vision that was introduced and assimilated in a matter of weeks—it was unified around a decade-old strategic scenario that made excellent political sense in the circumstances of 1917.

The Marginalization of Political Freedom

One of the most important political facts about the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that the most orthodox and militant advocates of revolutionary Marxism were staunch fighters for political freedom. One of the most important political facts about the rest of the twentieth century was that the most orthodox and militant advocates of revolutionary Marxism were devoted to regimes that crushed political freedom to an unprecedented degree. Part of the root of this marginalization of political freedom lay in the component parts of Old Bolshevism.

The *konspiratsiia* underground was an attempt to import into absolutist Russia the techniques of the permanent campaign created by German Social Democracy. The pre-war SPD model had required political freedom for its operations since the party had to defend its 'alternative culture' against the pressure of a dominant elite. After taking power, the Bolsheviks discovered that what might be called state monopoly campaignism was an even more effective tool for inculcating socialist values and creating an alternative culture. The propaganda state so closely associated with Communist regimes is in fact the SPD model applied without restraint or limitations, by means of denying political freedom to all potential rivals. There is a historical link of the most direct kind

between Lassalle's call for permanent agitation in the 1860s and thousands of Chinese teenagers waving little red books in the 1960s.

The defining feature of the specifically Bolshevik wing of Russian Social Democracy was the Old Bolshevik scenario: the socialist proletariat creates a *narodnaia vlast'* that is capable of carrying out the *narodnaia revoliutsiia* 'to the end'. A central goal embodied in the slogan 'to the end' was obtaining the maximum amount of political freedom under the circumstances. But the process of unleashing a vast popular upheaval and protecting it against 'counter-revolutionary' enemies constitutes the least hospitable environment possible for the flourishing of political freedom and its attendant attitudes of mutual tolerance. As Nikolai Bukharin remarked in early 1918, 'In a revolutionary epoch . . . the press, meetings, meetings are the weapons of *civil war*, together with munition stores, machine guns, powder and bombs'.[25]

After 1914, Lenin shifted his sights from Russia to the wide perspectives of a Europe that he believed to be on the eve of a socialist revolution. Perhaps paradoxically, this 'European' perspective decreased the salience of political freedom in his rhetoric, as can be seen in *State and Revolution*, where it is barely mentioned. Political freedom was never a directly socialist value, even if individual European socialists were personally shocked by its suppression in Soviet Russia.

If a Bolshevik activist in 1912 could have seen a decade into the future, three things in particular would strike him as surprising and unexpected. The provisional revolutionary government of the Old Bolshevik scenario was now embodied in a permanent socialist government, with the party playing an unexpected role in running the state. The Bolshevik Party no longer looked up to the German SPD as a model party, but instead presented itself as the model party for revolutionary socialists worldwide. The goal of political freedom, almost the *raison d'être* of Old Bolshevism, was forgotten if not actively scorned. Thus had the hopeful nineteenth century turned into the grim twentieth century.

Notes

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3. Lenin, PSS, 4:189 (1899).
4. Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), 518 (Inaugural Address of the First International).
5. Ferdinand Lassalle, *Lassalle's Open Letter to the National Labor Association of Germany* (New York: International Publishing Co., 1898 [1862]).
6. Vernon Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
7. Karl Kautsky, *Das Erfurter Programm* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1965 [1892]), 219.
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9. M. Liadov, *Istoriia Rossiiskoi Sotsialdemokraticheskoi rabochei partii* (Izd. Zerno: St. Petersburg, 1906), vol. 2, 64.
10. Lenin, PSS, 5:14–15 (June 1901).
11. Lars T. Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered: 'What Is To Be Done?' in Context* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Press, 2006) (contains a new translation of the entire text of *What Is To Be Done?).*
12. J. V. Stalin, *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1952), vol. 1, 140–1 (August 1905).
13. Stalin, *Works*, 1:144 (August 1905).
14. Lev Kamenev, *Mezhdu dvumia revoliutsiiami* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2003 [1922]), 587–96 (this passage written in 1910).
15. Lenin, PSS 16:329 (1908).
16. Kautsky's article can be found in Richard B. Day and Daniel Gaido, eds., *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution: The Documentary Record* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), along with commentaries by Lenin and Trotsky. Stalin also wrote a commentary.
17. Lenin, PSS 26:143–4 (January 1915).
18. Karl Kautsky, *The Social Revolution* (Chicago, IL: Charles H. Kerr, 1902), 96–7; Karl Kautsky, *Road to Power* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996 [1909]), 88–91.
19. Kautsky, *Road to Power*, 83.
20. Lenin, PSS, 26:351–5.
21. This and the preceding quotation come from an important programmatic document written by Lenin and Zinoviev in October 1915; see Lenin, PSS 27:48–51.
22. Vladimir Nevskii, *Istoriia RKP(b): kratkii ocherk* (St. Petersburg: Novyi Promotei: 2009 [1926], 502.
23. For documentation of the Bolshevik stand prior to Lenin's return, see Lars T. Lih, 'The Ironic Triumph of Old Bolshevism: The Debates of April 1917 in Context', in *Russian History*, 38 (2011), 199–242.
24. Martov, 'Mirovoi bol'shevizm', in *Izbrannoe* (Moscow: Vneshtorgizdat, 2000). Translated chapters from Martov's 1919 book can be found online at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/martov/index.html>.
25. Bukharin' s *Program of the Communists (Bolsheviks)* (1918) is available online under the title *Programme of the World Revolution:* <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bukharin/works/1918/worldrev/index.html>.

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CHAPTER 3

STALIN AND STALINISM

KEVIN MCDERMOTT

Stalinism was one of the most violent political systems in history, imprisoning, repressing, and executing millions of people, and much of the responsibility for this carnage lay with its prime creator, Joseph Stalin. Yet under his tutelage, the USSR won the 'war of the centuries', became a respected world industrial and military superpower, and Stalin, a mass murderer, was genuinely mourned on his death in March 1953. What is more, he is still today revered by many former Soviet citizens. How to account for this contradictory essence of the 'Stalin phenomenon'? If this chapter had been written before the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, it would almost certainly have been contextualized in the fierce debates among 'totalitarians' and 'revisionists' that dominated academic discourse since the 1970s. The former emphasized the terroristic core of the ubiquitous Stalinist state, the awesome power of the Great Dictator himself, and the passivity of an atomized, indoctrinated, and intimidated populace, while the latter posited the law of unintended consequences, the inherent constraints on Stalin's authority, the dysfunctionality of the system, and a certain interactive relationship between state and society. Neither view was 'wrong', but both were self-limiting and self-fulfilling. Now, with the partial opening of the vast ex-Soviet archives and the advent of the 'cultural turn' that has widely affected modern historiography, such restrictive methodologies have been enriched by more nuanced interpretations. In this chapter, I aim to provide a critical review of recent research on Stalin and Stalinism as well as offer my own thoughts on a political leader and polity which had a mighty impact not just on the USSR, but on the twentieth-century world.

Interpretive Models

It has proved tempting for generations of scholars to seek all-encompassing definitions of Stalinism: it was a 'totalitarian dictatorship'; a 'counter-revolutionary conservative bureaucracy'; a 'revolution from above'; the logical authoritarian outcome

of Marxism-Leninism; a latter-day manifestation of tsarist autocratic political culture; the result of Russian socioeconomic 'backwardness' or of the hybrid Caucasian sociocultural milieu in which the young Stalin was embedded; a 'neo-traditionalist' or 'neo-patrimonialist' state and society; even the product of a one-sided negotiation between a powerful modernizing state and a resistant population. These remain potent structural frameworks. However, it seems to me problematic to define 'Stalinism' as a singular entity, not only because the nature and scope of Stalin's power transmogrified and the Soviet system itself changed substantially over the twenty-five years of his rule, but also because diverse strata of Soviet society held contrasting experiences of, and attitudes towards, the 'Great Leader' and the state order. Upwardly mobile worker-promotees, 'de-kulakized' peasants, self-satisfied bureaucrats, silenced intellectuals, privileged Stakhanovites, starving Gulag internees, enthusiastic Communist Youth, repressed ethnic minorities—all endured, survived, and helped to fashion Stalinism in numerous ways, not all of them negative. This plurality of lived experience suggests 'Stalinism' meant different things to different people. What was a murderous hell for many was 'socialism in the making' for others. Indeed, it is more than likely that individuals had multiple reactions to Stalinist policies, welcoming some, rejecting some, doing their best to adapt, ignore, or circumvent others.

That said, it is incumbent on historians to impose a measure of rationality on highly dynamic and fluid entities. For me, two determinants exerted a decisive influence on Stalin's actions and modus operandi: the historical context of war and the ideology of revolutionary Marxism, or what I have termed elsewhere the 'war-revolution model'. Self-evidently, this construct cannot elucidate all the complexities of a rapidly changing state and society over twenty-five years. Nor should it be artificially stretched to encompass all aspects of Stalin's words and deeds, nor blind us to his pragmatism and reluctance to be hamstrung by ideology. Rather, I see the model as a tool for placing Stalin in historical perspective, moving us away from the more populist images of him as a brutal tyrant motivated solely by power lust, sickly paranoia, and personal evil. Above all, by linking Stalin's main theoretical principle—the revolutionary socialist transformation of society—to the methods he adopted to achieve this goal—a war-like assault on 'backward' social strata, class 'aliens', and diverse 'enemies of the people'—the model closely connects Stalin, the individual, with 'Stalinism', the system he forged.

As far as the war part of the equation is concerned, it is certainly no exaggeration to contend that Stalin's entire world view and many of his policies were filtered through the prism of war, actual and potential, civil and international, and the dangers, hopes, risks, and opportunities associated with these periods of crisis. Like all Bolsheviks, he was deeply afflicted by a 'siege mentality', discerning multifarious adversaries within and outside the country. War and revolution were inextricably interrelated in Marxist-Leninist theory (the inevitability of inter-imperialist wars, socialist revolution as a result of imperialist wars and interventionist wars against socialist states), but for Stalin war became also a central tenet of his *domestic* policies—the idea of an internal 'class war' against omnipresent 'enemies' seemed to take possession of him by the early 1930s. Crucially, international war, looming ever closer by the latter part of the decade,

posed an existential threat to his authority and regime. It was certainly not lost on Stalin that the Soviet state itself was the product of 'total war' and the military collapse of tsarist Russia in 1917. He was utterly determined that no such fate would befall his creation. Hence, the absolute imperative for security and military strength; hence, the ferocity and extreme urgency of the 'revolution from above' (*c*.1928–32); and hence, the Great Terror of 1937–8 as an assault on a perceived 'fifth column' both in the party-state apparatuses and in society at large. For Stalin, the stability of the regime, and therefore of the entire Revolution and his place in it, was threatened by foreign wars of invasion and by an internal class war with the peasantry, 'bourgeois specialists', 'anti-Soviet' criminal elements and foreign 'spies', all potentially allied with various party oppositions and insubordinate bureaucrats.

Wars, civil wars, and the threat of war and social unrest formed a constant leitmotiv in the political careers and personal experiences of all eminent Bolsheviks. The brutalizing effects of the First World War and especially the vicious Civil War (1918–20) were formative for Stalin. The 'era of catastrophe' between 1914 and 1945 and the fierce ideological battles between Left and Right (and *within* the Left) epitomized the international context of Stalin's rise to power and the construction of the Soviet command economy. Furthermore, the First World War gave a great boost to the notion of 'managing the people', a new mode of governance based partly on surveillance of popular moods and the idea of social transformation. This was not simply a Bolshevik or 'totalitarian' tendency, but one that marked a general shift to 'modern' forms of state and social organization.[1] Martial aphorisms littered Stalinist rhetoric—the 'socialist offensive', the 'industrial front', the 'collectivization campaign'—and the typical Stalinist style of dress was a military tunic, breeches, and leather boots, symbolic of the aggressive male assertiveness of Bolshevik culture. Later, victory in the Great Patriotic War was *the* major legitimizing factor for the regime, while conversely the relative liberalization and decentralization associated with the war years was viewed with great apprehension after 1945, which partially accounts for the rapid restoration of the more coercive methods of post-war 'High Stalinism'.

The 'revolution' part of my equation is, admittedly, more problematic, given the seemingly regressive nature of many of Stalin's social and cultural domestic policies and the hard-headed *Realpolitik* of much of his international diplomacy. But it seems to me that we must take Stalin seriously as a Marxist revolutionary dedicated to the construction of socialism, however grossly distorted his vision in practice. Indeed, much recent work has restored the centrality of Marxist ideology to Stalin's thought and action.[2] He devoted his whole life to the cause of socialist revolution and suffered for it under the tsars. His belief in the creation of a 'new Soviet person' and in a rapid socialist transformation of Soviet society should not be underestimated. Indeed, the 'second revolution' of 1928–32 irrevocably changed the lives of millions of Soviet people—a revolution par excellence; and even the Great Purges can in part be construed as an anti-bureaucratic revolution against 'Menshevik' inertia, routine, and cliques in the name of Bolshevik activism and ideological commitment. More starkly, it has been argued that 'in terms of the fusion of politics with private life, the

period from 1934–1939 was even more revolutionary than the era that had preceded it'.[3] Neither can we continue to assume that Stalin was merely interested in 'socialism in one country', as customary wisdom would have it. He never forswore the ultimate goal of international revolution, combining a tireless drive for socialist construction in the USSR with a firm belief in the Soviet Union as the embodiment of the revolutionary idea. As Lars T. Lih has observed, 'as first servant of the state, he was also first servant of world revolution'.[4]

In this sense, war and revolution were central to Stalin's and the Bolsheviks' collective experience and had a crucial impact on their thinking, self-perceptions, and actions. Indeed, it is likely that Stalin emerged as undisputed leader of the Communist Party in 1928–9 precisely because he was widely viewed as the chief exponent of ideological radicalization and revolutionary upheaval in a crisis epitomized by war scares and civil-war mentalities. Finally, it must be acknowledged that Marxist-Leninist ideology itself was not a static entity. It was a dynamic body of thought, albeit under Stalin increasingly straitjacketed, that included diverse currents, opinions, and trends, some libertarian, others authoritarian; some inclined to nationalist proclivities, others passionately internationalist; some socioculturally 'progressive', others more traditional and 'reactionary'; some 'technocratic', others 'voluntarist'. Stalin's position within these currents fluctuated according to internal and external circumstances; he cannot be pigeonholed in one camp or another. But at all times he remained, in his private writings as much as in his public utterances, staunchly committed to the broad Marxist-Leninist vision of socialist transformation.

What is more, Stalin's revolutionary ethos was rooted in the specific political culture of Bolshevism. Russia, ruled for centuries by autocratic tsarist regimes, was chronically underdeveloped industrially, technologically, and militarily. The overriding mission of the Bolsheviks on coming to power in late 1917 was not only to modernize the country, but to do so rapidly on an unprecedented *socialist* basis. This necessarily entailed vast and violent socioeconomic and cultural upheavals and these intense, often ill-planned, mobilizational campaigns were eminently suited to a party which was far from a 'normal' political organization. The Bolshevik (from 1918 Communist) Party was deeply intolerant of opposition, was highly secretive, conspiratorial, disciplined, and hierarchical, and the Leninist canon of 'democratic centralism', fiercely applied under Stalin, was designed to ensure that no 'factions' could appear in the party to contest the decrees of the leadership. Bolshevik political culture was, then, in many ways authoritarian, even dictatorial, and its adherents were quite prepared to use state coercion on a massive scale to achieve their transformatory goals. The resulting social flux and alienation, bureaucratic insubordination, and forms of popular resistance fostered yet further rounds of heavy-handed hyper-centralized state intervention. In these inauspicious circumstances, Stalin's repressive, and ultimately murderous, propensities, evidenced as early as the Civil War, came to the fore in a spiral of terror designed to safeguard his own power position and the very existence of the Soviet state. It is from these historical conjunctures, ideological presuppositions, and mental landscapes that 'Stalinism' arose and evolved.

Stalin's Personality and Rise to Power

A related theme that has provoked much speculation and contention is Stalin's personality. Like Hitler, Stalin was able to stamp his character on the style and substance of state politics—personality and power cannot be separated. He has been variously described as a gangster and hoodlum, a latter-day Genghis Khan, a criminal paranoiac or psychopath, motivated solely by megalomania and prodigious vindictiveness, but also as a cold faceless bureaucratic mediocrity, a mysterious 'grey blur' in the famous words of one of his Menshevik rivals, even a 'weak dictator'. I am no psychiatrist and hesitate to pronounce on Stalin's mental state, but there can be little doubt that he possessed a damaged brutalized psyche and was an unusually self-contained individual, who, while capable of amiability and sociability, increasingly rarely displayed 'normal' human traits such as friendship and relational bonds. He was also a *litsedei*, a man of many faces. It has been argued by a leading American scholar that there were 'several Stalins': 'Stalin the harsh schoolmaster' severely chastizing his pupil-colleagues, 'Stalin the wise padrone' patiently soothing relations with visiting Western diplomats, and 'Stalin the grand editor' scrupulously reviewing and redacting all major documents of state. What emerges is a contradictory figure whose characteristics and comportment are constantly changing, whose personality shifts from one month to the next, and whose policies result in one crisis after another.[5] 'There were various Stalins,' Lazar Kaganovich said of his boss shortly before Kaganovich's death in 1991. 'Post-war was one Stalin, the pre-war was another. Between 1932 and the 1940s was yet another. Before 1932 he was entirely different. He changed. I saw at least five or six different Stalins.'[6]

This notion of 'several Stalins' is a useful corrective against oversimplification and cosy monocausal explanations of his actions and attitudes. It helps us appreciate the dynamic nature of his power from *primus inter pares* in, say, 1929 to unassailable dictator a decade later. It suggests that, depending on the situation and his interlocutor, Stalin could be a consummate actor, tailoring his remarks to fit the audience, and a master of deception, feigning moderation, even affability. Finally, it is a striking reminder that Stalin, like all politicians, was prey to vacillations, inconsistencies, and ad hoc responses to unforeseen circumstances. Like Churchill or Roosevelt, Stalin frequently faced profound crises to which there were no self-evident solutions, had to deal with incompetent and possibly insubordinate officials and a recalcitrant society, at times must have felt overwhelmed by the complexity of domestic and foreign situations, and therefore may have experienced a measure of self-doubt and powerlessness. The dreadful days after the Nazi invasion on 22 June 1941 most evidently spring to mind. None of this seeks to diminish his overall control of Soviet decision-making, or attenuate his cruelty, coarseness, and overweening self-confidence, so grotesquely manifested in the 'personality cult' that surrounded him from 1929 to his death. But it does complicate the caricature of the self-possessed arrogant dictator in whom all power and knowledge is vested.

Controversy and obfuscation accompany Stalin from birth. He was born Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili probably in December 1878 (many say 1879) into a poor family in Gori, a small town in Georgia. The young Stalin was well educated by the standards of the day, learnt to speak Russian fluently, and there was nothing in his background, regardless of the legendary beatings meted out by his drunken father, to suggest that a future tyrant was in the making. By his early twenties Dzhugashvili was becoming increasingly drawn to the radical Marxist politics of local Bolshevik organizations, which strove to revolutionize the workers, forcibly overthrow the hated autocratic tsarist regime, and, ultimately, usher in a socialist state. Soon his zealous agitational work and militant stance brought him to the attention of the exiled Bolshevik leader, Vladimir Lenin, whose patronage was vital for Stalin's rise up the party ladder. In 1912 he was co-opted as a member on the party's Central Committee and in the same year adopted the symbolic Russianized pseudonym 'Stalin', implying 'man of steel'. After playing an important, though hardly inspiring, role in the revolutionary events of 1917, Stalin emerged as a powerful figure in the new communist leadership, epitomized by his appointment as General Secretary of the party in April 1922. Why was this non-intellectual, non-charismatic 'bureaucrat' able to win the vicious internecine power struggles following Lenin's premature death in January 1924?

Orthodox accounts stress Stalin's organizational acumen, his penchant for back-stabbing, political intrigue, and slander, his advocacy of the popular, ostensibly 'nationalist' theory of 'socialism in one country' and the failings, weaknesses, and poor tactical judgement of his rivals, above all Lev Trotsky. These are important explanations, notably Stalin's frequent resort to *otsechenie*, or 'chopping-off' troublesome comrades at home and abroad. But arguably the key to his victory was his ability to project himself to other leaders, sub-elites, and the party in general as a massively hard-working practical 'centrist' who had solutions to all the internal and external dilemmas facing the country. He had a well-deserved reputation for getting things done. He was assiduous in consolidating his power base throughout the party, state, secret police, and military hierarchies, was extremely attentive to personnel issues and successfully fashioned a cohort of devoted followers—a veritable Stalinist 'clan', typified by the ever-loyal Viacheslav Molotov. In short, by the mid-1920s Stalin had made himself indispensable to the Communist Party and, significantly, his increasingly radical policies in the years after 1928 proved attractive to the new brand of militant unschooled proletarians who formed the basis of the party at that time.

A perennial question has been the relationship between Leninism and Stalinism. It is commonly argued that Lenin's pre-revolutionary principle of 'democratic centralism', which effectively subordinated the party to the will of its leadership, his insistence on strict ideological purity and tendency to suppress 'heretics', his recourse to the secret police and creation of the first labour camps, and his passionate belief in 'iron discipline' and centralization, culminating in the infamous 'ban on factions' in March 1921, not only furnished Stalin with robust weapons in the succession struggles, but also laid the foundations of the 'totalitarian' state in the 1930s and beyond. In this view, Stalinism was Leninism writ large, the logical, even inevitable, outcome of its belligerent progenitor.

Though no one would deny the numerous lines of continuity between the Leninist and Stalinist phases of the revolution, such a teleological approach tends to underestimate the scope for alternative routes of development and obscures potential 'turning points' in Soviet history. It also overlooks crucial dissimilarities between the Leninist and Stalinist systems, which from the late 1920s included a virtual deified 'cult of the personality', the near total muzzling of freedom of expression and opinion in the party, the stultification of cultural and intellectual endeavour, and the unprecedented mass scale of state-sponsored terror. The one Stalinist 'innovation' that scholars most often emphasize is the arrest and murder of loyal communists, a taboo practice under Lenin.

The fearsomely repressive essence of Stalinism was in many ways the consequence of the historic socioeconomic imperatives that the leaders set themselves after 1928. The dilemma was awesomely stark: how to rapidly industrialize a poor war-ravaged agrarian country? Lenin's compromise New Economic Policy from March 1921 was a gradual step in the right direction, but no Bolshevik knew for sure whether the NEP was leading forward to the radiant socialist future or back to the despised capitalist past. The Stalinists' 'solution' was breathtaking in its extremity and scope: unheard-of tempos of 'planned' industrial and technological development largely funded by the export of grain to be extorted from the new party-controlled collective farms. But breakneck industrialization, forced collectivization, the accompanying brutal attack on traditional peasant culture, and the social cleansing known as 'de-kulakization' in the late 1920s and early 1930s, resulted in intense social and demographic flux, wide-scale peasant resistance and rural famines of almost biblical proportions, severe urban overcrowding and shortages, rising crime levels, ethnic disputes and tensions, and the creation of regional self-defence networks and cliques among overstretched party, state, and police officials, who sought to manage and deflect central supervision. All these outcomes of Stalin's 'revolution from above', many of which were unintended, engendered conditions that were propitious for the hunt for 'enemies' and scapegoats to explain the dire crises that afflicted the country in the early to mid-1930s. In this important sense, state terror, which for many historians encapsulates the very foundation of Stalinist governance, had far-reaching systemic, as well as more subjective, origins.

Recent Historiographical Approaches

Since 1991 we have been inundated with huge amounts of top-secret documents on Stalin and Stalinism—a veritable 'archival gold rush'. These confirm conclusively that the old model of an all-powerful exclusive and monolithic state dominating a passive atomized and alienated society is unnecessarily restrictive and one-dimensional. What has been termed the 'new social history' of Stalinism contends that 'social groups, rather than merely being a site of regime action, are actors in their own right', an understanding that privileges the *inter-mutuality* of state and society.[7] It is argued that the grand vision of the Stalinist utopia, or at least important aspects of it, engaged and energized

the everyday activities of numerous citizens, particularly the young, and forged inclusive practices and social bonds.[8] In this conception, the Stalinist 'mass dictatorship' was the product not so much of an independent external state, but of the interplay and negotiations of regime and society. In the controversial formulation of one expert, it was a system which 'in appropriating modern statecraft and egalitarian ideology . . . frequently secured voluntary mass participation and support [whereby] "dictatorship from above" transforms itself into "dictatorship from below" '.[9] For certain, these are open-ended and deeply contested issues, but a consensus has emerged based on a more nuanced and subtle theoretical grasp of the production of Stalinist power and the multifaceted interrelationship between state and society.

These findings do not mean, however, that the designation 'dictatorship' is inapplicable. Few experts would underestimate the coercive powers of the Stalinist state or its fundamentally anti-democratic character, though even here the picture is more complicated than normally assumed, as I hope to show below. Stalin by the mid to late 1930s was a dictator, whose word was gospel and whose propensity to state-sponsored repression via a scarcely controllable secret police was all too apparent, albeit tempered according to circumstance. Furthermore, the Soviet political system lacked many of the constitutional and social checks and balances that limit the prerogatives of the executive in liberal democratic systems, not least the existence of an independent judiciary, and there was no legally enshrined 'civil society' in the USSR whereby power is routinely negotiated between a legitimized central authority and a consenting social polity and in which civil liberties are guaranteed in practice, not just in theory. Nevertheless, if we delve below the surface of Stalinist governance the picture becomes more opaque, contradictory, and 'messy'. At the elite level, there was an in-built tension in the Stalinist system between an increasingly hyper-centralized, and ultimately personalized, form of decision-*making* and a highly complex, multi-layered, arguably ramshackle, decision-*implementation* process, in which decrees from the centre might or might not be carried out on the ground by overworked and often ill-trained and ill-educated local functionaries. Stalin was perfectly aware of this paradox. In September 1930 he coined a barely translatable phrase which typified his less than subtle methods of personnel management: 'inspecting and checking up by punching people in the face' (*proverochno-mordoboinaia rabota*).[10] Again in June 1937 Stalin grumbled: 'It's thought that the centre must know and see everything. No, the centre doesn't see everything; it's not like that at all. The centre sees only a part and the rest is seen in the localities. It sends people, but doesn't know these people 100% and you must check up on them.'[11]

The essential ambivalences at the heart of the Soviet state and society are encapsulated in recent historiographical debates. My brief summary here of the polemics does not do justice to the subtleties of the protagonists' arguments, but put simply one 'camp' of scholars, influenced by Foucauldian theories, have concluded that many Soviet citizens internalized the values and goals of the Stalinist project, or at least learnt in Stephen Kotkin's memorable aphorism to 'speak Bolshevik'. According to this striking formulation, Stalinism's strength rested not only on coercion and propaganda, but also on its productive ability to articulate and create social identities in line with the broad socialist

agenda. Moving a conceptual step beyond Kotkin, Jochen Hellbeck's analysis of private diaries offers what he calls 'a glimpse into the domain of *Thinking Soviet*', a mindset through which Stalinist subjects made sense of their existence by cultivating a genuine Soviet mentality based on the emancipatory and self-actualizing effects of the Bolshevik Revolution. This in turn reinforced what Hellbeck contentiously terms the 'joint operation of the individual and state order in modes of participation and mobilization'.[12] While not eschewing such regime-affirming evidence, a second cohort of historians associated with Lynne Viola has identified various forms of 'resistance', broadly defined, among the Soviet people, including infrequent intentional acts of political dissent and rebellion, everyday social and economic disobedience, even strategies of survival such as *blat* ('pull'). These resistances, as Viola prefers to call them, should not be exaggerated and the regime was rarely seriously threatened by active large-scale opposition, aside from mass peasant revolts against collectivization. None the less, the existence of resistant behaviours, in the sense of both *Widerstand* ('active rejection') and *Resistenz* ('immunity'), ranging from bandit gangs and workers' strikes to gender dissent and the black market, even the ubiquitous political jokes, bawdy popular rhymes (*chastushki*) and rumours, demonstrates that many Soviet citizens refused to comply fully with the rules of the game and were able to 'work the system' to their minimum disadvantage. Some, mainly industrial workers at times of socioeconomic crisis, were even prepared to challenge the Stalinists' right to interpret 'Soviet power' and the meaning of the October Revolution. Viola concludes persuasively that 'resistance was only one part of a wide continuum of societal responses to Stalinism that included accommodation, adaptation, acquiescence, apathy, internal emigration, opportunism, and positive support', attitudes that could change over time often within the same individual.[13]

It would seem to be the case, too, that the Stalinist leadership did at times, however reluctantly and under duress, react to pressures from below and espouse policies and attitudes that were broadly 'popular'. The limited 'neo-NEP' of spring and summer 1932, the granting of private plots to collective farmers, the increased consumer goods production projected in the Second Five-Year Plan, Stalin's sponsorship of 'luxury' items in line with his slogan 'life has become better, life has become happier', and the growing appeals to Russocentric *étatisme*, all suggest that the Stalinist elite was not totally immune to 'public opinion' in the search for legitimacy and effective mobilization strategies. Could we tentatively call this a 'populist' or 'neo-populist dictatorship'?

As for the presumed uniformity of the Stalinist state, Viola has provided several important qualifiers. She maintains that the 'state' was multi-layered and 'more complex than the traditional state-society binary would suggest; it was neither monolithic nor external and alien to "society" '. At times, society 'collaborated' with one part of the state against another, siding with the centre against over-zealous local officials, as in the case of the peasantry after Stalin's 'Dizzy with Success' article in March 1930; or conversely forming tacit alliances with local bureaucrats against unpopular central policies, such as unrealistically high grain procurements in the famine years of 1932 and 1933.[14] So, as Sheila Fitzpatrick asks: where does the boundary lie between 'us' and 'them' in a system where many minor officials in the rural areas were poverty-stricken, whose social

background and status was not far removed from the local inhabitants, and who had to mediate the centre's directives to suit local conditions and demands?

The state was not monolithic also in the sense that it was not uncommon for regional officials, enterprise managers, and professionals to engage in dysfunctional behaviour, or more accurately 'strategies of self-protection'. James Harris reminds us that in the main these actors were members of the establishment, loyal Stalinists, and therefore only with great difficulty can their activities be described as 'resistance'. Nevertheless, in order to evade the pressures of the Five-Year Plans and under-fulfilment of the plan, local officials sought to divert the attentions of the centre and mask the low levels of production by devising practices such as the outright falsification of figures, self-protection networks, and the scapegoating of local oppositionists and other 'enemies of the people'. The significance of these evasion tactics is that Stalin could never be sure that his subordinates were obediently carrying out central decrees. The party-state apparatus was thus scarcely the smoothly functioning monolith depicted by the 'totalitarian' theorists of the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, in the early 1930s a series of anti-Stalinist 'oppositions' were discovered, the most famous being the 'Riutin Platform' of 1932. The author of this devastating assault on embryonic Stalinism, the middle-ranking Bolshevik Martemian Riutin, roundly denounced Stalin's domestic and foreign policies as un-Leninist and demanded his removal from the leadership. Stalin would not forget such gross violations of democratic centralism.

Stalin's Terror?

This brings me to the most contested area of Stalinism—the Great Terror. How to make sense of the seemingly arbitrary orgy of violence that descended on the Soviet state and society between August 1937 and November 1938? Very few scholars today doubt Stalin's signal role in the Terror, a process which claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Soviet officials and citizens. Stalin's input can be seen at multiple levels: in September 1936 he appointed Nikolai Ezhov, a known hard-line adversary of 'anti-party elements', as head of the secret police (NKVD); he initiated, orchestrated, and edited the scripts of the three Moscow Show Trials as a result of which his old Bolshevik rivals Grigorii Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, and Nikolai Bukharin were shot; he oversaw the secret trial of Marshal Tukhachevskii and the decimation of the Red Army command; he signed 362 'death lists' condemning almost thirty-nine thousand party luminaries and other influential figures to capital punishment; he participated in some of the interrogation sessions of leading prisoners; he even had several members of his own extended family and close relatives of his associates arrested, presumably in an attempt to test the fealty of his subordinates; and together with his propagandists, he set the overall tone and atmosphere of the Terror—the xenophobic suspicion of foreign 'spies' and 'agents', the all-pervasive threat of 'wreckers', 'saboteurs', and 'double-dealers', and the endless exhortations to uphold 'revolutionary Bolshevik vigilance' in the face of 'enemies of the people'.

Recently declassified documents have extended our knowledge of Stalin's nefarious activities. A few examples of his numerous interventions will suffice. In late July 1937 he and his Politburo colleagues ratified the notorious NKVD Order 00447, the so-called 'kulak order', which cold-bloodedly listed the number of people to be incarcerated (*c.*193,000) or shot (*c.*76,000) in all the main cities and regions of the USSR. In the event, these figures were massively exceeded. In November 1937 Stalin gave a private speech vowing that 'anyone who attacks the unity of the socialist state, either in deed or in thought, yes, even in thought, will be mercilessly crushed', ending his tirade with the gruesome toast: 'To the final destruction of all enemies . . .!'[15] He proved as good as his word, sending many telegrams to local authorities demanding that 'saboteurs' and 'wreckers' be peremptorily shot. For instance in July 1937, Andrei Andreev, despatched to Saratov to root out 'enemies', reported to his boss that nine members of the provincial soviet apparatus had been arrested and requested that a 'band of anti-*kolkhoz* [collective farm] right-wing Trotskyite wreckers' should also be detained. Stalin replied immediately: 'The CC [Central Committee] agrees to Andreev's suggestion.' All suspects should be brought 'to trial and shot'.[16] On 20 August 1937, Stalin and Molotov signed the following memorandum: 'To raise the quota of first category [death penalty] sentences in Krasnoiarsk territory by an additional 6,600 people.' A week later, and possibly linked to this instruction, the head of the Krasnoiarsk district committee informed Stalin that a fire had destroyed a local granary. Stalin responded the same day by coded telegram: 'Take all measures to discover the arsonists. Try the guilty immediately. Sentence—shooting. Publicise the executions in the local press.'[17] Stalin pulled no triggers, but metaphorically there are oceans of blood on his hands.

While recognizing Stalin's determinant role in the Great Terror, it would be grossly simplistic to conclude that everything sprang from the machinations of one evil man. The mass nature of the repressions required mass involvement and complicity. The actual victims were generally selected on the ground by overworked and often over-zealous secret-police officials, who were prone to commit excesses. These NKVD operatives were assisted by the civil police, regional party functionaries, and members of the Communist Youth and agricultural councils. As the islands of the Gulag Archipelago expanded, so the network of bureaucratic perpetrators broadened exponentially. Several People's Commissariats (Ministries) and their local representatives became closely implicated: transport, defence, forestry, and health among others. Ultimately, the circle widened to include ordinary citizens. Many arrests were the result of denunciations lodged, for whatever reason, with the NKVD. Amidst an officially sanctioned pseudo-populist atmosphere, workers denounced bosses at stormy factory meetings, peasants denounced collective farm directors, colleague denounced colleague for careerist motivations, and neighbour denounced neighbour over some domestic or personal dispute.[18] It cannot be excluded that some denouncers were ideologically motivated; others were simply fearful.

There is also ample evidence that not a few citizens welcomed the spectacle of communists persecuting other communists as resentment ran deep over the luxurious lifestyles, corruption, nepotism, high-handedness, and even sexual licentiousness of local

officials. Furthermore, some, perhaps many, seem to have applauded the targeting of 'social marginals', 'kulaks', 'White Guardists', ex-aristocrats, and priests, the so-called 'former people'. It would appear that illiberal attitudes and social stigmatization of discredited elites continued to be a constant feature of everyday Soviet life, and it might be extrapolated that aspects of the Terror gathered a measure of popular support. A suggestive rubric put forward most recently by two experts is: 'State violence—violent societies'.[19] The state may well have identified the 'enemies', but they were perfectly recognizable to many Soviet citizens, brutalized by years of class warfare, ethnic animosities, and social alienation. Mass propaganda and media campaigns no doubt played their part in deluding people into thinking 'wreckers' were omnipresent, but this propaganda often chimed with public perceptions and beliefs.

The 'orthodox' interpretation of the motivations of the Terror emphasizes Stalin's power lust, his utter compulsion to eliminate all real and perceived opponents, and to replace them with a new cohort of pliant 'yes-men' in a paranoiac drive for autocratic rule. Others more recently have argued that many local and regional party bosses were apprehensive that Soviet power was under threat from the millions of former kulaks, White Guardists, tsarist policemen, and other multifarious 'counter-revolutionary elements', enfranchised by the 'Stalin Constitution', whose votes in the proposed secret-ballot elections to the Supreme Soviet in December 1937 might destabilize the regime. These officials, it is surmised, helped to radicalize the thrust of central repressive policy. Ideological and socio-biological inputs into the Terror have also come to the fore. It has been deduced that in order to create the 'socialist utopia', Stalinist leaders had to uproot 'unfit human weeds', 'vermin', and 'filth', all those who deviated from the social and ideological norms of the emergent Stalinist polity. In this sense, the mass repressions must be seen, in part, as an exercise in socio-ideological cleansing on a massive scale. More controversially, historians influenced by post-modernist theories have inferred that the sources of the Terror should be located as much in the psyche of rank-and-file communists as in the conscious aims of the Stalinist elites. It is claimed that the Great Purge did not represent 'an unprecedented breakdown of all moral behavior', but rather 'rested on an ethical system . . . within which grand-scale violence could make moral sense' as a quest 'to bring humanity to moral perfection'. The disconcerting conclusion is that 'less a state policy than a state of mind. . . . Party terror was the result of a never-ending interrogation of the self',[20] a product of 'self-policing' and 'self-purging'. These innovations have undoubtedly enriched our understanding, but they tend to fall short of a holistic explanation and fail to address adequately the key question of the exact timing of the repressions.

What radicalized the situation precisely in early to mid 1937 was, in a word, the darkening international climate. In this threatening context the political and security elites identified a presumed 'fifth column' that had to be liquidated to ensure both the territorial integrity of the USSR and the very survival of the system itself (and its leaders) in the event of the forthcoming conflict. The evidence for the 'fifth column' notion, first explored many years ago, is quite compelling. Stalin himself indicated in February 1937 that the 'wrecker' would 'save up his strength *until the moment of war, when he will really*

do us a lot of harm',[21] and after the war he reportedly asserted to a Georgian colleague that, although 'mistakes' had been made, the terror had essentially destroyed 'fifth columns' and thus saved the USSR from external and internal defeat.[22] By the mid-1930s a kind of 'spy mania' had overtaken Stalin: 'Is it not clear that as long as capitalist encirclement lasts there will continue to exist among us wreckers, spies, saboteurs and murderers, sent into our hinterland by the agents of foreign states?'[23] The dictator's logic was that in a highly charged international context epitomized by ever-present war scares, these 'spies' would enlist the backing of ethnic diasporas in the USSR—Poles, Germans, Balts, Finns, Koreans—who were suspect precisely because of their 'national' ties to bordering hostile states and populations. Recidivist criminals, bandits, political subversives, and 'socially harmful elements' could, it was feared, form common cause with the 'spies' and 'alien' ethnic minorities. There is surely no definitive monocausal explanation for complex phenomena like the Great Terror, but it appears that the Soviet leadership's deep anxiety about a 'fifth column' of 'traitors' embedded in both the elites and society at large best accounts for the dramatic extension of mass arrests and executions from the summer of 1937.

The Great Patriotic War and 'High Stalinism'

What we call the Second World War, but which is still known to Russians as the 'Great Patriotic War' (1941–5), marked the low and high points of Stalin's dictatorship. A barely conceivable 27 million Soviet people perished during the conflict and, officially, wartime material losses amounted to 2,500 billion roubles. The military and intelligence disasters of the early months of the fighting, which resulted in the near total destruction of the Red Army and Air Force, and the capture and death of many hundreds of thousands of soldiers, almost cost the USSR its sovereign existence, and have invariably, and not incorrectly, been laid at Stalin's door. Yet he emerged after the titanic Battle of Stalingrad as a more than competent military strategist and led his country to victory in the most barbaric war in history. Proclaimed as the indefatigable infallible 'Generalissimo' who had ensured victory over the Teutonic hordes, he enjoyed, quite likely for the first time, buoyant levels of popular support. The imperative to expel the hated invader had forged a certain national unity between people and government, and the successful prosecution of the war more than any other single factor legitimized the Stalinist order and Stalin himself as undisputed 'Boss'. But after this momentous triumph, the aging 'Leader' and the system he created lost much of their transformatory elan as reconstruction, stability, and 'normalcy' became the watchwords of an increasingly ossified apparatus. What impact did the war have on Soviet state and society? How did Stalin's method of rule change, if at all, after 1945?

In many ways, the war clearly exposed the contradictory face of Stalinism. Power became even more centralized in the shape of the State Defence Committee headed by

Stalin. Fearsome repression, particularly of 'traitorous' populations such as the Volga Germans, continued apace, strict censorship remained, conditions in the labour camps deteriorated, and military discipline at the fronts was draconian. At the same time, there was a considerable degree of decentralization at the regional and sociocultural level, extending even to the emergence of fairly wide-scale black-marketeering and reprivatization of collective farmlands. Stalin also famously sanctioned a tentative rapprochement with the Orthodox Church in the name of mobilizing mass support behind the all-consuming war effort. The horrendous conditions affected all sections of society, but the Soviet 'middle classes' were rewarded for their patriotic labours by a greater degree of cultural, academic, and institutional autonomy than at any time since the NEP in the 1920s. With central interference perforce weakened as a result of wartime exigencies, provincial bureaucrats, industrial 'captains', and the scientific and cultural elites became more accustomed to relying on their own initiative and hence their self-confidence grew. These and other 'thaws' were not the result of a single decision taken by Stalin or any other leader, and neither did they represent an unmitigated shift in the regime's attitude to Soviet citizenry. Still an underlying mutual mistrust between rulers and ruled remained just below the surface. Moreover, many of these concessions were made reluctantly, were tacit recognitions of reality on the ground or were responses to pressures 'from below'. Nevertheless, they were highly significant both for wartime and post-war developments. They seemed to indicate a potential mutation in the relationship between state and society, raising hopes and aspirations among millions of Soviets, especially the intelligentsia, that once the fighting was finally over civic reconciliation, reform, and better living standards would be the order of the day.

These expectations, for the majority, were rudely dashed after May 1945. Why? To grasp the post-war period we must take on board an insight often downplayed or overlooked in the historiography: the intimate interdependence of foreign and domestic affairs. That is, we cannot understand Stalin's internal policies without reference to the emergent Cold War and the massive threats and strains it placed on the Soviet system. At a time of massive economic reconstruction and endemic social and ethnic tensions, the leadership rapidly resorted to tried and tested methods of rule. Stalin remained as despotic and vindictive as ever, even suspecting and demoting his most loyal of acolytes, Malenkov and later Molotov and Mikoian. Arrests, of mainly 'criminals' not 'politicals', were stepped up (although mass executions ended), with the number of Gulag inmates peaking at 2.5 million in the early 1950s. Conditions in the factories generally worsened, inflation reduced real wages in 1950 to 1940 levels, the wartime reinvigoration of the Orthodox Church was suspended, tight cultural and ideological regimentation was introduced to muzzle and discipline restive intellectual elites, and life on the reimposed collective farms was as tough as in the pre-war era. A dreadful, but little known, famine occurred in 1946–7. But perhaps the most baleful features of late Stalinism were rising anti-Semitism and crass appeals to 'Soviet patriotism' and 'anti-cosmopolitanism'. These campaigns culminated in attacks on the Jewish intelligentsia, most notoriously the 'Doctors' Plot' in which several eminent physicians were arrested and accused of complicity in the deaths of two

Soviet luminaries. Their trial, it appears, was set for the end of March 1953, but Stalin's timely demise earlier that month put an end to their ordeal.

Regardless of the capricious, even paranoid, aspects of Stalin's rule in the years 1945–53, there was undoubtedly a method in his madness. Two main theories have been put forward to explain the 'rationality' of late Stalinism. Already in the mid-1970s, Vera Dunham expounded her seminal idea of the 'Big Deal' in post-war Soviet Russia. She defined it as an attempt to broker a social partnership with the burgeoning professional 'middle class', a strategy mirrored for the 'masses' by the contemporaneous expansion of Stalin's 'personality cult'. Her argument was that in order to rebuild the shattered Soviet economy, regenerate and stabilize the system, and create some measure of social cohesion, repression was not enough: the regime also had to seek new forms of popular support. The chosen route was 'a long-term middle course [which] modified [the] wartime treaty with *all* the people in favor of a new treaty with *some* of the people'. It was essentially a tacit contract between the state and its own bureaucratic and technical intelligentsia.[24] But crucially, and with far-reaching consequences, the 'Big Deal' also 'included a conversion of public values: a transition from militant revolutionary asceticism and selfless devotion to public deeds to individual consumption, a prosperous life, and civilized conduct'[25]—stereotypically 'middle-class' aspirations. It is here that we can detect the origins of the gradual de-ideologization of the system and society in the post-Stalinist epoch as both conservative bureaucrats and 'ordinary citizens' sought a privatization of life based on mass consumption and concomitant rising living standards.

More recently, Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk have invoked the concept of 'neo-patrimonialism' as key to Stalin's post-war modus operandi. It is a term that denotes a combination of traditional autocracy with modern features of governance, signifying an uneasy marriage of strikingly personalized, occasionally brutal, authority at the apex of power with more rational and predictable forms of administration and decision-making at lower levels via expert commissions and committees often staffed by a younger generation of officials. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk argue that from 1945 virtually until his death in 1953 Stalin's behaviour, while displaying 'high drama' and obsession, followed a clear interlocking political pattern. In part, it was the rationale of a ceaseless drive to preserve his dictatorial rule by means of periodically harassing and humiliating his top aides, even the physical elimination of a few perceived 'enemies'. But they also insist that Stalin's machinations concealed a broader ideologically driven logic of consolidating a 'separate, respected, and powerful socialist system'. To this end, Stalin initiated key institutional innovations and regularized administrative procedures, most evident in the Cabinet, the Council of Ministers, to which Stalin delegated much responsibility. Indeed, he seems to have left the detailed running of the government and economy largely to subordinates, although when deemed necessary he could, and did, decisively intervene.[26]

The overall image of Stalin under 'High Stalinism' is of a man who obstinately and tenaciously clung to the reins of power, even as his mental and physical capacities began to desert him. He controlled the main levers of decision-making and, crucially,

continued to dominate the secret police apparatus until his last days. He countenanced no contradiction. He was morbidly fearful of his own frailties, loneliness, and finality, terrified of becoming irrelevant to the system he had created, even dimly aware of his own impotency. Yet, if we believe Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, Stalin was not solely motivated by sickly power lust. Relating back to my earlier notion of the 'war-revolution model', he retained a deep ideological commitment to the building of a modern strong communist utopia, both in the USSR and in the newly established 'socialist commonwealth' in Eastern Europe, at a time of profound war scares and international tensions associated with the embryonic Cold War. The Stalin who emerges in these post-war crisis years is more complex, but certainly no less a tyrant.

Conclusion—What is Stalinism?

Having stressed the dynamic shifting nature of Stalinism, can any unifying features be identified? The one major constant is that the Stalin years signified unprecedented, rapid, and unrelenting state-sponsored transformations on a scale scarcely seen in modern history. From the 'second revolution' of the five-year plans to the cataclysmic Terror, from the inhuman barbarity of the Great Patriotic War to the painful reconstruction and renewed mass repression of the post-war period, literally no one's life emerged unscathed and untouched. In the midst of these compulsive campaigns and upheavals, the state contrived inclusive practices, policies, and visions that generated enthusiastic commitment among many Soviet citizens while consigning millions of others to purgatory in exclusionary violent outbursts. Stalin's personal input in forging this contradictory polity can never be underestimated. But neither should the participatory role of large sectors of society be overlooked. So, my answer to the conundrum 'what is Stalinism?' would be: it was a militarized, formidably *dirigiste* system, which repeatedly, and with some success and social support, sought to mobilize and impose order on a 'quicksand' unstable society—in the process uprooting, repressing, and refashioning countless numbers of people in a grand historical and revolutionary mission for 'socialist modernity' and national security.

But *was* it 'socialist'? Let me evade this difficult, and ultimately unsolvable, question by suggesting that it is largely irrelevant to judge Stalinism in relation to some canonical Marxist or Leninist yardstick, itself subject to endless interpretation and reinterpretation. The main thing is that it was perceived by its creators, by the vast majority of Soviet citizens, and by the bulk of the outside world as socialist, regardless of the finer nuances of Marxist theory. It was vehemently anti-market and resolutely *étatist*. It destroyed large-scale (and virtually all small-scale) private enterprise and ownership of the means of production and replaced them with a state-controlled system of manufacture, distribution, and retail. It formally forbade property inheritance. It certainly lacked industrial democracy and worker participation, but it was fundamentally and implacably anti-capitalist. Beyond a few disgruntled Trotskyists, Stalinism represented socialism.

Notes

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3. Cynthia Hooper, 'Terror of Intimacy: Family Politics in the 1930s Soviet Union', in Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman (eds.), *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 65.
4. Lars T. Lih et al. (eds.), *Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925–1936* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 36.
5. Norman M. Naimark, 'Cold War Studies and New Archival Materials on Stalin', *Russian Review*, vol. 61 (2002), 1–15.
6. Feliks Chuev, *Tak govoril Kaganovich: Ispoved' stalinskogo apostola* (Moscow: Otechestvo, 1992), 154.
7. Michael Geyer with assistance from Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Introduction: After Totalitarianism—Stalinism and Nazism Compared', in Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 34–35.
8. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Alf Lüdtke, 'Energizing the Everyday: On the Breaking and Making of Social Bonds in Nazism and Stalinism', in Geyer and Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Beyond Totalitarianism*, 266–301.
9. Jie-Hyun Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship: Towards a Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Dictatorship', in Jie-Hyun Lim and Karen Petrone (eds.), *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship: Global Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 3.
10. Lih et al. (eds.), *Stalin's Letters to Molotov*, 210.
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12. Jochen Hellbeck, 'Speaking Out: Languages of Affirmation and Dissent in Stalinist Russia', *Kritika*, vol. 1 (2000), 71–96, quotes at 85 and 92.
13. Lynne Viola, 'Introduction', in Lynne Viola (ed.), *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 1.
14. Viola, 'Introduction', 9 and 11.
15. Cited in Anatolii G. Latyshev, 'Riadom so Stalinym', *Sovershenno sekretno*, no. 12 (1990), 12.
16. Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), *fond* 73, *opis'* 2, *delo* 19, *listy* 16–160b.
17. Vladimir N. Khaustov et al. (eds), *Lubianka. Stalin i glavnoe upravlenie gosbezopasnosti NKVD 1937–1938* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond 'Demokratiia', 2004), 325 and 329.
18. The best sources on the 'populist' and everyday aspects of the Terror are Wendy Z. Goldman's two books, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
19. Christian Gerlach and Nicolas Werth, 'State Violence—Violent Societies', in Geyer and Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Beyond Totalitarianism*, 133–179.

20. Igor Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1–6.
21. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 2 (1994), 21 (my emphasis).
22. Cited in Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), 126.
23. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3 (1995), 6.
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25. Vadim Volkov, 'The Concept of *Kul'turnost'*: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process', in S. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism: New Directions* (London: Routledge, 2000), 214.
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CHAPTER 4

MAO AND MAOISM

TIMOTHY CHEEK

Mao Zedong lived from 1893 to 1976. He is remembered as China's paramount Marxist-Leninist leader and theorist, the author of Maoism. A junior Party member in the 1920s and controversial regional leader in the countryside in the late 1920s and early 1930s, by the mid-1940s Mao had become the supreme leader of China's Communist movement, and in 1949, of the new People's Republic of China (PRC). The personality cult around Chairman Mao culminated in outrageous popular veneration in the turbulent Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and his memory remains vibrant in China today. His writings continue to serve as the official doctrine of the still-ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and his memory elicits strong feelings (both positive and negative) among China's diverse population, as well as students of Marxism and revolution worldwide. In the international history of communism Mao Zedong played a key role in leading the largest communist revolution in the world outside Russia and in his 'creative development' or 'Sinification' of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy to suit Chinese conditions, adaptations that have influenced revolutions in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. In all, Mao remains the pre-eminent representative of the successes and failures of Chinese revolutionary ideology and praxis.

Scholars of modern China have often noted that Mao's role in the Chinese socialist revolution combined the individual roles of both Lenin and Stalin in the revolutionary era of the Soviet Union. Looking back from the perspective of the twenty-first century, a time in which considerably more of Mao's misdeeds have now been documented, Mao's legacy and memory seem even more complicated. Despite his many mistakes and towering cruelty, he is still widely respected in China. His ideas are still influential and his image is often invoked by contending interests in China. In many ways, it is more apt to describe Mao as the Marx, Lenin, Stalin, *and* Pol Pot of China's tumultuous twentieth century. He systematized ideas and values that still animate public life in China, he provided the orthodoxy for the CCP, he was the harsh but effective state builder, and he was the tyrannical political purist responsible for tens of millions of deaths. This brutally incongruent heritage represents the unsettled business of China's modern history and recent reforms. In all, Mao Zedong and Maoism are significant as representatives of

both Marxist and state socialist practice in twentieth-century China *and* of the contributions of Chinese experience to communist ideology and practice worldwide.

Mao and China's Revolutions

Mao was the continuous revolutionary. He joined and came to represent the efforts of many Chinese to find revolutionary solutions to the challenges of nationalism, socialism, and economic development confronting China from the early twentieth century. Mao's career and writings can be viewed in three major stages: as a junior member of the new CCP who led the shift from an urban to a rural revolutionary strategy (1920s–mid-1930s); as the primary leader of the revolutionary Party and army from the late 1930s to the mid-1950s; and as the undisputed charismatic supreme leader of the CCP and PRC from the 1950s until his death in 1976.

Mao was but the foremost of a generation of Chinese intellectuals and activists known as the May Fourth generation (for the patriotic anti-imperialist movement centring on the demonstrations in Beijing on 4 May 1919 that protested against the transfer of some Chinese territory to the Japanese in the Treaty of Versailles). This generation wrestled with a confusing array of Western ideas—from anarchism to pragmatism to social Darwinism and finally, after 1917, Marxism—as a way to explain the failures of the Chinese government to resist the inroads of European and Japanese imperialism. May Fourth intellectuals were vigorously iconoclastic. They were also a diverse generation that came, in the 1920s, to divide across the political spectrum from neo-conservatives seeking a Confucian revival, to political liberals hoping for democracy, to militarists seeking order, to communists seeking revolution.

Mao entered the May Fourth world from a rural community in central China. He was born and raised in Shaoxing, in Hunan province. His father was a prosperous farmer and was able to pay to send Mao to school. Thus, Mao was not a peasant in the simple sense, but was most emphatically a rural person who believed that the heart of China lay in the villages, not in the cities. Mao soaked up the rich array of May Fourth translations from European and Japanese sources, including socialist and soon Russian Marxist writings (Mao never learned a foreign language). He chose to be a revolutionary and set off—first to Changsha (the capital of Hunan) and then Beijing and Shanghai—to find that revolution.

The CCP was officially founded in Shanghai in July 1921, and Mao attended the First Congress as a regional delegate from Hunan. The new party was small and under the strong influence of Comintern advisers. In accordance with Comintern policy, the CCP entered into a 'bloc within' United Front with the stronger Nationalist Party (Guomindang, GMD) led by Sun Yat-sen. In the mid-1920s, Mao participated in this United Front, joining the GMD (while maintaining his CCP membership) and teaching at the GMD's Peasant Training Institute at the Whampoa Military School, in the southern province of Guangdong. The GMD, with CCP members participating particularly

in agitprop roles, set out to reunify China by attacking militarist regimes in central and northern China. This Northern Expedition (1926–7) brought Mao back to Hunan where he researched and wrote his seminal call for rural revolution, 'Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan' (1927).[1] This text defined peasants as revolutionary and as key allies in the proletarian revolution. After the counter-revolution of April 1927, in which GMD forces under General Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) decimated Union and Communist ranks in Shanghai and other major cities, Mao and colleagues repaired to the countryside, setting up rural soviets in south-east China. This lasted until 1934, when GMD military forces crushed the Reds and forced them on the retreat that came to be known as the Long March.

Mao had not only not been a top leader during this period, but also had fallen out of favour with the Moscow-appointed Chinese leadership of the Party. In fact, his highest Party positions in the mid-1920s were in the GMD—at the Peasant Training Institute—before the 1927 split. However, the debacle of the 1927 GMD White Terror and then the collapse of the rural Jiangxi Soviet in 1934—in which urban orientation and positional warfare were shown to fail while rural orientation and guerrilla warfare at least provided survival—catapulted Mao to some top positions. Over the next few years he skilfully built a coalition of colleagues, sensible military and social policies, and a persuasive ideological corpus that confirmed him as the leader of the Chinese revolution.

The winning policies were built, or at least expressed, in terms of Mao's understanding of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Between 1936 and 1938, Mao returned to reading (translations of) Marxist-Leninist texts and produced his own writings outlining his basic philosophy. His core texts are 'On Contradiction' and 'On Practice' (1937)—which privilege social praxis over doctrine and declared that the superstructure (that is, human will) could in certain circumstances play the 'leading and decisive role' in revolutionary praxis. Mao's 'Introducing *The Communist*' (1939) named the 'three magic weapons' for defeating the enemy in China's revolution: the United Front, armed struggle, and Party building. This was the beginning of Mao's application of the Bolshevik model to China, or the 'Sinification of Marxism'. It produced effective policies that contributed to the CCP's national victory within a decade.

These policies were implemented in the 1940s when the CCP's capital was in the dusty Shaanxi province market town of Yan'an in north-west China. Internally, Mao ruthlessly eliminated his rivals for leadership and effectively streamlined and energized Party rank and file. This was accomplished most clearly in the 1942–4 Rectification Campaign. Here, Mao's writings from 1936 to 1942 became the core of the Party's ideology and policy. At the heart of Mao's approach was the 'mass line' (*qunzhong luxian*)—a broadly participatory mode of political administration that brought in the views, interests, and experiences of common working people in a fashion never stressed by Lenin or Stalin. This was not democracy. Indeed, Mao and the party stressed 'democratic centralism' and were ruthless in suppressing dissent.

Yet, this repression of dissent inside the Party—which foreshadowed disastrously expanded versions of this tyranny in 1957 and 1966—parallelled effective organizational and public policy reforms, including simplified administration, armies that not only did

not rape and pillage but actually paid for the food they used, and a powerful ideology that mobilized a generation of cadres to 'serve the people'. This revolutionary praxis was summarized in the 1 June 1943 'Resolution of the Central Committee of the CCP on Methods of Leadership' written by Mao and included in his *Selected Works*.[2] The lessons of coordinated but flexible organizing outlined in the resolution have been applied to social movements elsewhere, from the Vietcong in Vietnam, to Che Guevara in Latin America, to Naxalite insurgents in India. The key points are (1) a version of 'think globally, act locally' but with a strong Leninist chain of command, (2) a hard-headed assessment of the 'masses' one wants to mobilize (usually 10 per cent activists, 80 per cent average, and 10 per cent backward or reactionary), (3) a focus on nurturing that activist 10 per cent to get the movement going, and (4) the importance of coordinated propaganda to guide leadership and motivate the rank and file. The philosophical method of this approach to revolution privileges praxis in a process of 'theory-practice-theory', in which an ideology (Marxism) is tested by actual efforts to do something and then modified on the bases of the practical results of one's efforts. The mechanism for this social learning is the superstructure: the human will of the 'thought-reformed' cadre.

Externally, Mao led his colleagues in making the CCP and their programme for China look better than the only likely alternative: the increasingly corrupt Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek. By 1939, Chiang Kai-shek as the hero of war-torn China and the GMD began a leadership cult to establish Chiang as China's charismatic revolutionary leader. The publication of Chiang's book, *China's Destiny*, in 1943 brought Chiang's leadership cult to a crescendo. Thus, the Mao cult of the 1940s responded to this practical challenge, as well as drawing from the example of Stalin.[3] Mao adroitly cast his public utterances in moderate terms. His January 1940 essay, 'On New Democracy', became widely popular among urban readers, especially youth. While clearly a Marxist-Leninist document, Mao's programme promised a long period of democratic transition on the road to eventual socialism and communism. Additionally, he provided a public history of China's humiliating confrontation with European and Japanese imperialism that, using Lenin's ideas on imperialism as the highest form of capitalism, made sense of China's history, and more importantly, gave Chinese readers as sense of purpose and hope and meaning.[4]

His peers certified Mao Zedong as the charismatic supreme leader at the Seventh Congress of the CCP in Yan'an in April 1945. From that time on, he was known as Chairman Mao. In the ranks of the Party leadership he was, at first, restrained and practical, but all deferred to him. Externally, he was the great father of the revolution who could publicly proclaim in September 1949, 'The Chinese People Have Stood Up!'[5] Mao's work in the new People's Republic was largely practical in the early 1950s, as this rural movement adjusted to the profound tasks of administering not only major cities but also a territory the size of Europe. The new socialist government 'leant to one side'—taking on the Soviet model of a centralized command economy and joining the Soviet Union in the emerging Cold War. Russian advisers guided the modern sector and Stalin lent (but did not give) funds to help rebuild the war-torn nation. The Korean War came upon the new government almost immediately—in June 1950. This confrontation

with the US heightened the already brutal land reform and would cast a pall over the anti-intellectual political movements beginning the next year, as well as anti-corruption campaigns, during the early 1950s.[6] Yet, life for most Chinese was better than it had been in living memory.

By 1956 the new PRC government was feeling the pains of office.[7] Bureaucratism, the limits of the Stalinist economic model, and restiveness among the working peoples and, of course, the intelligentsia, bedevilled the CCP administration. Mao at first sought moderate application of his dialectical approach. In 1956 he gave speeches that have been redacted as 'On the Ten Great Relationships' which sought a practical and balanced mixed economy, somewhat in the mould of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP).[8] In 1957 Mao revived the Rectification Movement approach of self-and-mutual criticism but extended it beyond the Party to the educated public, inviting intellectuals and professionals to 'let a hundred flowers bloom' and to criticize the ruling CCP. This was an unprecedented act for a ruling communist party and was vigorously opposed by Mao's senior colleagues, yet as supreme leader Mao prevailed.

This was Mao's last great public ideological effort that had some promise of success. In 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People' (original text, February 1957) Mao sought to lay the theoretical basis for limited—but real—public criticism and dissent under a ruling communist party.[9] By defending loyal opposition to Party bureaucratism and abuses of power as 'contradictions among the people' in contrast to 'contradictions with the enemy', Mao went further than even the most daring of Eastern European regimes in the de-Stalinization of 1956. This promising opening to socialism with a human face was ruined by Mao's own dictatorial style and petulance. When the invited criticisms arrived in the spring of 1957 they were not to Mao's liking, and so he turned about-face and declared the critics to be counter-revolutionary rightists. The text of 'Correct Handling' was significantly rewritten before official publication in June 1957 to make Mao look good and to ratchet back permissible discussion to the restricted scope familiar to other state socialist societies. It was a failed experiment that cost the lives and careers of half a million intellectuals and Party members.

The next decade was a grim one for China and for Mao's legacy. The 'Hundred Flowers' rectification of 1957 was followed by a harsh nationwide purge, the Anti-Rightist Movement. Next, Mao promoted an ambitious economic development strategy, the Great Leap Forward (1958–60) that was disastrously flawed and ruthlessly implemented. It contributed to at least 30 million deaths—mostly attributable to famine—by 1961. This has to be the single greatest crime of Mao's rule of China. After a retrenchment in the early 1960s (administered by his number two, Liu Shaoqi) brought an end to the famine and began the economic recovery, Mao initiated a final effort at total revolution: the Cultural Revolution. It was designed to protect China from the dire threat of revisionism that Mao saw in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev (which had fuelled a bitter anti-Soviet polemic by Mao in the early 1960s). China and the Soviet Union fell into an ideological split that culminated in national confrontation and fighting on the Manchurian border in 1969. Now, at Mao's behest, the Party revived the thought-reform and rural orientation of the Yan'an period. Mindless adulation of every utterance by Mao

was represented in the 'Little Red Book', *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*. In all, some 4.4 billion books and pamphlets of Mao material were published in the ten years 1966–76.[10] The social results were catastrophic—Red Guard youth gangs terrorized communities under the slogan 'to rebel is justified' (a Mao quote), colleagues denounced each other, universities were closed to send students and faculty to the countryside 'to learn from the masses', and individuals were subject to endless 'thought investigations'.[11] To the degree that the populace in China participated in this self-subjugation, the Cultural Revolution even outpaced Stalin's Russia as the closest realization of Orwellian dystopia.[12] Mao clearly allowed this to happen and saw the suffering as a necessary cost of resisting 'revisionism'.[13]

Mao's final revolution was, after decades of angry confrontation with American imperialism, to spring a rapprochement with Nixon and the US in 1972 in order to outmanoeuvre the Soviet Union. This external pragmatism softened the already faltering chiliastic rituals of the Cultural Revolution and left China, and China's ideological leaders, tired and dispirited, but still standing at the time of Mao's death in September 1976.

The post-Mao period saw a brief effort to deify him further, in order to secure the new leadership of Chairman Hua Guofeng. This produced the controversial volume v of Mao's *Selected Works* in 1977 (which has since been repudiated and withdrawn from circulation in China). The survivors of the pragmatic Thermidor leadership of the early 1960s regrouped under Deng Xiaoping, who took control from late 1978 until his death in 1997. Under this reform leadership, Mao was demoted from his godlike status but has been maintained as the leader of the revolution and the font of ideological legitimacy. The 1981 CCP Central Committee resolution on 'Some Questions in the History of Our Party' codified this assessment with the famous formula: Mao's contributions were 70 per cent; his errors 30 per cent.[14]

Maoism: Revolutionary Ideology and Praxis

The ideological contributions of Mao Zedong are systematized in Mao Zedong Thought (*Mao Zedong sixiang*), which is the official ideology of the Chinese Communist Party. Post-Mao CCP authorities have made it clear that Mao Zedong Thought is the 'crystallization' of the revolutionary experience of the Party *and* the contributions of numerous other Chinese Marxists. Mao Zedong Thought is Sinified Marxism, according to this official view. Thus, it is reasonable to consider the ideological contributions of Mao as the key, but not the only, representative of Chinese contributions to Marxist thought and praxis worldwide.

In terms of philosophy, Mao's approach to Marxist analysis of society makes practice primary. It is the resolution of contradictions in material life *as experienced by individuals* that drives Maoist dialectics. By the 1960s, Mao clearly stated what had been

implied in his earlier work: the law of the unity of opposites trumps either the negation of negation or the transformation of quantity into quality (both of which he saw as subsets of the first law). The mechanism for Maoist practical dialectics, however, is human will—individual and collective. Thus, Mao is in both the humanist and idealist wings of Marxist thought, placing the superstructure over the base as the location of the motor of history (he first articulated this in 1937 in 'On Contradiction', apparently before Stalin made the same point in 1938).[15] This can be seen in Mao's transformation of 'proletarian' character from a description of a social class into a virtue that can be learned by any class through personality transforming praxis and ideological education (that is, through rectification). If Lenin thought only the Bolshevik party could push forward the wheel of history, Mao held that Bolshevization could be radically internalized in the individual (albeit under the dominating guidance of a charismatic party and its correct leader).

In terms of revolutionary praxis and political policy, the experience of the CCP under Mao's leadership created a variant of the Russian model. First, Mao instituted the *mass line*, an organized form of 'democratic centralism' that could be very responsive to local needs and which included the broadest actual popular consultation and participation in any communist movement. The dark side of the mass line was a propensity from the start to find numerous 'enemies' and scapegoats amongst the population. Second, the CCP applied Dimitrov's call in the Comintern for Party education far more thoroughly than any communist movement. The *Rectification Movement* of 1942–4 implemented the mass line by providing noble goals of public service, the means to inculcate those goals among administrators (Party and government cadres), and mechanisms to test the level of success in their implementation. Used well, rectification provides one way to inform, guide, and control a revolutionary regime; used badly it has led to the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Third, Mao and the CCP consistently returned to the idea of the *United Front*, an ideological tool that allows a Bolshevik regime to share power with other social forces. The United Front is institutionalized in the PRC government and has operated ever since the 1940s (with the exception of some years in the Cultural Revolution). As with Dimitrov's proposals on Party education, the CCP's United Front takes a Soviet example—the popular front idea of Second World War years—much further and has made it a tool that has contributed to the longevity of the CCP in power. Fourth, Mao consistently attacked *bureaucratism*, even though his flawed efforts (and personal faults) ultimately failed to address the issue successfully. Nonetheless, the corpus of Mao Zedong Thought provides a trenchant analysis of what Djilas called the New Class (though not with that phrase) and justifications for using the mass line and rectification to combat the abuse of political privilege. Fifth, Mao stressed *rural issues* and the peasantry. Integrating a primary focus on the countryside into the programme of a communist party has, perhaps, been the single most influential contribution of Chinese revolutionary praxis worldwide (and this despite Mao's effective abandonment of peasant interests from the mid-1950s). Finally, Mao was straightforward about politics and favoured *armed struggle*. He was a violent revolutionary, and a pragmatic military leader. While it was Sun Yat-sen who had first concluded that China's modern revolution had to have its own army, Mao took this lesson to heart more than other Chinese

revolutionaries. His writings contain hundreds and hundreds of pages of practical analysis and examples of guerrilla warfare and other forms of popular violent struggle. Those who have found themselves in intolerable social circumstances where local governments violently repress opposition have found Maoist military strategy compelling—from the Vietcong to the Naxalites.[16]

There are also negative contributions, or negatives to each of these six developments, which are most poignantly embodied in the ideological repression of the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign, the massive deaths of the Great Leap Forward, and the social terror of the Cultural Revolution. All were generated by the self-same Mao Zedong Thought and the CCP. Additionally, Maoism has become a stultifying orthodoxy in China, both during his later life and since his death. Thus, the legacy of Mao Zedong and his Thought is deeply mixed—having led China to 'stand up' in 1949 he needlessly struck China down in over a decade of avoidable human suffering, and Maoism remains as an ideological straitjacket in China today.

Historiography and Legacies

Scholarly studies, as well as popular images, of Mao and Maoism have been contentious since Mao first appeared in the press in the 1930s. Similarly, the memories today of Mao, his ideas, and the system built around them vary widely, both inside China and out. Improved scholarship on Mao and Mao's writings helps ground these debates more firmly in scholarly knowledge but cannot hope to resolve them. Finally, the meanings of Mao and Maoism in China live on unconsciously today as habitual social and mental practices.

Mao's own writings continue to be a resource not only for his ideas but also on his life. A wide range of Mao's writings are now available in China, and a substantial number of these for the years up to 1958 have been published in careful scholarly translations in English.[17] In the case of Mao Zedong's writings the general issues of interpretation are further complicated by his stature as the Great Helmsman, the Saviour of the Chinese People, and the author of 'Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought'. The problems in textual transmission and editing of Mao's writings most nearly resemble those of theological texts, such as biblical writings and commentaries.

Recent scholarship, especially in China, helps us to know which sort of Mao, or Mao text, we are reading.[18] First, beginning in 1944, volumes of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* (*Mao Zedong xuanji*) began to appear by the order of one or another high-level CCP institution. They were edited by committee according to a 'collective wisdom' criterion: the belief that Mao 'represented' the summation of Sinified Marxism-Leninism and thus should reflect the consensus of the Party leadership. Both Mao himself and advisers from the Soviet Union were active in this process during the early 1950s when the authoritative *Selected Works* were compiled. Second, during the Cultural Revolution and particularly at the height of the Red Guard movement in 1967, Mao writings

were published by a confusing array of unnamed editors based on the belief that the Chairman was a lone genius not subject to revision by any collective leadership, least of all by a Party riddled with 'capitalist roaders'. Finally, since Mao's death, Party historiographers have published both restricted circulation and publicly available collections of Mao writings that reflect in varying degrees a historicist urge to understand the past as it really was and to place Mao and his individual writings more firmly in historical context.

While it makes sense to read the scholarly translations of the original versions of Mao's writings in order to understand Mao in his time and place, the official (or 'collective wisdom') editions are still useful. Even though they have been more or less heavily edited from the original, these are the versions that were studied by hundreds of millions of Chinese since the 1950s—as well as by readers around the world—as the authoritative word of Mao and doctrine of the CCP.[19]

Both the academic study of Mao and popular images of Mao in Western societies have been tied to other interests, most usually the war of the day.[20] Edgar Snow's glowing account in 1936 gave readers 'a Lincolnesque figure' who promised to lead China in the worldwide fight against fascism in what became the Second World War. Dire accounts of atrocities by 'Chi-Coms' and 'Reds' in the 1950s and 1960s spoke to the experience of US-led UN forces in the Korean War (1950–3), America's own fight in Vietnam, and more broadly the US–Soviet struggle for dominance in the Cold War. Since the 1960s, China has been presented in scholarship and popular media in a roller coaster of ideal images (beginning with anti-Vietnam War activists in the 1960s) and dystopian tales (such as reports of forced abortions in the 1980s).[21]

Scholarly treatments of Mao during his life assumed that Mao was absolutely critical for understanding 'China today'.[22] Whether they thought Mao a saviour or a tyrant, or a bit of both, these studies tended to neglect other actors and other forces in explaining the rise and current operation of 'China's revolution'. By the 1980s, scholarship was looking not at revolution but at modernization, not exclusively at Mao (or other leaders) but at the experience of wider groups of peoples, especially individuals who had to live through Mao's policies.[23]

Writings on Mao today can be distinguished by their attitude towards Mao: bad Mao, good Mao, and historical Mao. Since Li Zhisui's influential reminiscence of his years as Mao's personal doctor was published in the 1990s there has been a steady stream of scholarship and popular writing depicting Mao as fundamentally evil. Significantly, these writings have featured Chinese émigrés who understandably have strong feelings about their experiences under Mao's rule.[24] They echo an emerging literature in Chinese from PRC authors (but published in Hong Kong) that is similarly critical.[25] These works tend to explain the excesses of CCP leadership, notably the terrible famine of the Great Leap Forward and the social chaos of the Cultural Revolution, in terms of Mao's personal character. The influence of the bad Mao approach is widespread and is reflected in most scholarly studies, even those seeking a more nuanced and contextual understanding.

There is also a body of scholarship that seeks to recover or redeem a good Mao. Nick Knight has been a consistent advocate of taking Mao's ideas seriously and in a body of

sound scholarship over the past few decades has made a good case for the significance of Mao's thought beyond the man himself. Similarly, Rebecca Karl seeks to rescue the sense of revolutionary agency for ordinary people that can be found both in Mao's writing and some of his life. Maurice Meisner, noted throughout his career as an academic Marxist but one who applied Mao's ideas to a harsh criticism of the Cultural Revolution, produced a recent biography seeking to distinguish Mao's contributions from his failings.[26] Like the scholarship in Chinese coming from scholars associated with the 'New Left', these authors seek in Mao's writings and life tools for fighting injustice today.[27]

The majority of scholarship follows the historical Mao approach. Most biographies have focused on making sense of Mao in his context over judging his character. Stuart Schram's early biography of Mao came out in 1966. It remains a reliable story based on a careful reading of Mao's writings in historical context. There are literally dozens of scholarly biographies of Mao, most dating from the 1960s and early 1970s or from the last ten years. Among the more recent are grand tales by Philip Short or Ross Terrill and brief introductions by Delia Davin or Jonathan Spence.[28] A collective effort to assess Mao in his historical context, as well as to assess current views of Mao inside China, in the developing world, and in Western societies from a historical perspective is offered in *A Critical Introduction to Mao* (2010).[29]

The most important legacies of Mao and Maoism are in China itself. Mao Zedong remains an enduringly manifold figure in China today, loved and hated; used for political leverage, celebrity value, and even religious efficacy. There is, however, a shared theme in all the multiple Maos embraced (or excoriated) among China's diverse population: *nationalism*. As we saw, Mao's 1940 essay, 'On New Democracy' told 'the China story', a story repeated by China's leadership today as the story of rising China: China was great, China was put down, China shall rise again.[30]

This China story and Mao's role in it are used differently by the CCP leadership, PRC scholars, workers and farmers (what we might call interest groups), in commercial culture, and, finally, in the personal memories of individuals. Politically, Maoism is the CCP's orthodoxy. It has been 'enriched' by doctrinal additions from Mao's successors at the top of the CCP: Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and more recently, Hu Jintao. Hu's emphasis on 'Harmonious society' will remind those familiar with Latin American history of other forms of authoritarian populism. On the one hand it draws attention to questions of social equity, but on the other hand, it also signals intolerance of dissent or 'disturbances' by protesters.[31]

Scholars now use Mao in most cases strategically (to hammer home a point or to shield themselves from political criticism), but more importantly, Mao is often not used at all in intellectual debate and discussion of public issues. It is the constituent parts of Mao's thought—the nationalism, pragmatism, calls for social equity—that animate debates and serve as legitimizing themes rather than the invocation of Mao's 'wisdom' per se.[32] Indeed, it is now possible to criticize Mao in limited focus (particular policies in the past) and even to poke fun at him in the arts.[33] There are a few scholars who invoke Mao's ideals in claiming that Maoism should be restored, but these calls are a distinct minority among scholars.[34]

China's workers and farmers are increasingly outspoken as the social consequences of reform create winners and losers. In the fight over resources that deregulation, privatization, and uncoordinated development have created, farmers, workers, and urban residents have protested and struck back. In such resistance they often invoke Mao's ideas and image to support their claims.[35] These are 'weapons of the weak' in which farmers and rural workers use Mao as they seek to protect their homes, their farmland, and their air and water from expropriation by developers and pollution by new rural industries.[36] Meanwhile, Mao, Maoism, and Mao Quotes rebound across the Chinese Internet supporting everything from today's Party policy to commemorations of Jiang Qing (Madame Mao) to rabid anti-foreignism.[37]

Mao has become a feature of popular culture. As Geremie Barmé notes, for many older Chinese, 'Mao was representative of an age of certainty and confidence, of cultural and political unity, and above all, of economic equality and probity'.[38] Not so for the youth of the 1990s who had not experienced life in Mao's China. Rather, as Barmé gleefully notes, youth found in this new Mao Cult 'a politically safe idol that could be used to annoy the authorities, upset parents, and irritate teachers'.[39] With this market in place, Mao's image has become a commodity item in street markets across China. T-shirts, cigarette lighters, art pieces, and bric-a-brac of all sorts sport the image of the Chairman (both as young revolutionary and older national leader). While for some these images are heartfelt, for others they are symbols of youth rebelliousness, and for many these commodified Maos signify celebrity interest rather than ideological commitment.

Mao now joins the host of popular tutelary gods in popular religious temples across China. This is an astonishing syncretism of twentieth-century ideological politics and long-standing Chinese religious folkways. Mao's image hangs from the rear-view mirrors of taxi drivers to ward off accidents; Mao's image has been put on ceremonial gold cash (used for the purposes of popular religion) with the words 'May This Attract Wealth' or with the traditional Eight hexagrams; and Mao's full image appears in these temples—both rural and in working-class urban neighbourhoods—not as a political figure but as a religious figure.[40]

One set of personal memories of Mao is becoming publicly important: the suffering of the 'sent down generation', the *zhiqing* (or 'educated youth'). While some still honour Mao and blame local despots and cheats for ruining Mao's vision, there are many who lay the blame squarely at Mao's feet.[41] These stories are explosive. They cannot cohabit a public space with the glorified Mao that gives legitimacy to the CCP. Thus, we rarely see the expression of these tales of suffering blamed on Mao himself published in China. We do, however, see them published abroad, and they are increasing. Jung Chang's controversial and critical biography of Mao, published in English in 2005 is, if nothing else, the tip of this iceberg of pain and suffering that will have to come out at some point.[42] Maoist China has yet to face its truth and reconciliation process.

In all, Mao's memory in China today is a two-edged sword of legitimacy for the CCP: an ambivalent symbol of national pride for educated Chinese, a cool brand for middle-class youth, a talisman of self-worth for China's dispossessed who have suffered under reform and globalization. Behind these meanings reside wider historical

meanings of hope and despair analysed by scholars in Western countries, as well as the inspiration Maoism provides for rural revolutions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

What is Maoism?

The essay in this *Handbook* on 'Stalin and Stalinism' concludes with a similar question, stressing the 'dynamic shifting nature of Stalinism'. This essay stresses the different Maos of different historical moments but more so suggests that the important Mao and Maoism has been in the eye of the beholder, in the communities that chose Maoism, had it foisted upon them, or seek to draw from it today. Nonetheless, there is a core to Maoism, usually referred to as revolutionary nationalism, the commitment to save China and then build up China and to do it radically, quickly, comprehensively. This also came with a world view: modern in the sense of teleology and faith in science and technology, internationalist in the sense of an identity of interests among peoples subordinated to the imperial powers of the day, self-confident in the hearts and minds of various revolutionary elites who were sure they had the truth and were competent to save China.

Stuart Schram, the doyen of Mao studies in the West, has long held that 'the soberer elements in Mao's thought' from 1935 to 1965 constitute 'a vehicle of Westernization' for China.[43] This is true if we think in terms of helping China to come to terms with the new power of the West since the mid-nineteenth century and the imperialism associated with it. The comparative perspective of Kenneth Jowitt on 'the Leninist response to national dependency' helps us see this 'Westernization' not as conformity but as an active engagement with the Western world order of the twentieth century. The Chinese case is in this sense a variant of the Leninist model. Jowitt argues, based on the case of Romania but with an eye to Soviet experience, that when a polity found itself under economic and cultural domination of Western powers in the early twentieth century, the Bolshevik model as articulated by Lenin and developed by Stalin worked in some countries as a way to throw off that dependency and achieve some degree of national independence.[44] Mao's revolution in China makes sense in Jowitt's model.[45]

This perspective echoes recent work on the Chinese revolution which tends to see a greater continuity and connection between the revolution of the 1920s led by Sun Yat-sen, the Nationalist Revolution led from 1926 by Chiang Kai-shek, and the socialist revolution led by the CCP and, by the 1940s, Mao. John Fitzgerald has persuasively argued that the key components of China's revolutionary order—including the charismatic party, integrated ideology, party control of the army, popular mobilization, and the leadership cult—all begin with Sun Yat-sen's reorganization of the Nationalist Party (GMD) in the early 1920s with Soviet and Commintern support.[46] This Sunism was then promoted by the GMD's next leader, Chiang Kai-shek. The difference between the Leninist GMD and the CCP were matters of degree, not kind, in this view. Other research on the social experience of the Chinese revolution in the 1920s confirms the fluid identities of Chinese revolutionaries across these two main parties, and other smaller parties.[47]

The harsh competition between the GMD and the CCP that broke out in April 1927 and which has been written into the historiographies on both sides of the Taiwan straits turns out to be much more 'dynamic and shifting in nature'. Not only in the 1920s but also into the decades ahead individual Chinese and families moved between the revolutionary parties. In the 1930s and 1940s, the difference between the GMD and the CCP was the relative failure of Chiang Kai-shek's 'New Life Movement' to create modernized adherents to Sunism and his inability to bring fractious warlords to heel or to withstand the Japanese invasion. The CCP, on the other hand, achieved a stunning success in their Rectification Campaign of 1942–4 which did produce a coherent Maoist force and was merely lucky to avoid the brunt of the Japanese invasion in the late 1930s.

Mao and Mao Zedong Thought have had an impact around the world. From Cambodia to Peru, and now in Nepal and among the Naxalites in India, Maoism is a living ideology, albeit one often as 'adapted' or localized as Mao's own efforts at 'Sinified' Leninism-Stalinism. The core influence, however is pretty clear: political revolution on behalf of the working, largely agricultural or peasant, poor pursued through violent conflict under the direction of a unified ideology, party, and supreme leader. Much less influential, but nonetheless present, is the continuing attractiveness to Left-leaning intellectuals in the West of Mao's revolutionary writings.[48] Together, these constitute the contributions of Chinese experience—both good and bad—to Marxist-Leninist praxis.

Despite the capitalist economic policies and ideological lassitude of the current Chinese government, Maoism lives on in China. This is mostly a social fact—structural and mental habits from High Maoism that continue to shape public and political behaviour in China today. The Maoist orthodoxy set up important social institutions that shaped life on the ground and continue to do so today. The three most important are the local Party committee (at each and every level of government and most large economic and residential organizations); the *danwei* work unit organization of employment, residence, and social insurance; and the *hukou* system of internal residential passports.[49]

These artefacts of living Maoism continue to shape social life in China even as they have changed under the post-reform forces of market and international contact. The Party committee system embodies the CCP's claim that the legitimate forum for public policy debate and policy formation is the Party itself, not the press, pubic square, coffee house, classroom, or proverbial kitchen debates. This has produced a cautious reluctance to get involved in public affairs because to do so is dangerous. Daily life in the work units and communes of Mao's China helped to create this political passivity and dependency on the state. Those who lived through the Maoist system carry with them the habits of thought and expectations that made sense under Mao's rule. This population, long corralled by the rules of non-democratic participation in *danwei* and commune life, does not have the habits of mind suitable for a liberal or tolerant society. These same habits and expectations even shape those who reject official Maoism and embrace alternate political ideas and social practices. Inevitably, some part of these values and expectations has been passed along—by parents and teachers—to younger generations. Naturally, they change with time and new experiences, but these mental models still shape the experiences and reactions of people across China. Central among these

hegemonic values are respect for intellectuals, intolerant modes of argument and illiberal public demonstrations, and the expectation that suggestions should be addressed to the state. It is this mental furniture from Maoism that will shape the lives of people in China long after the *hukou* passports and *danwei* work units are a thing of the past.

Notes

1. *Mao Zedong xuanji* (Beijing: Renmin, 1991), i. 12–44; *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967), i. 23–59; Stuart R. Schram (ed.), *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings 1912–1949* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1992–), ii. 429–64.
2. *Xuanji*, iii. 897–902; *Selected Works*, iii. 117–22; Schram (ed.), *Mao's Road to Power*, viii (forthcoming).
3. Lyman Van Slyke, in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. xiii. *Republican China, 1912–1949*, pt. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 692.
4. *Xuanji*, ii. 662–711; *Selected Works*, ii. 339–84; Schram (ed.), *Mao's Road to Power*, vii. 330–69.
5. Mao Zedong, 'Zhongguoren congci zhanli qilaide', in *Mao Zedong wenji* [Writings of Mao Zedong] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1999), v. 342–6.
6. Jeremy Brown and Paul Pickowicz (eds.), *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).
7. While some still view the early 1950s as a 'golden age' of CCP rule, there were profound tensions. See Brown and Pickowicz (eds.), *Dilemmas of Victory*.
8. *Xuanji*, v. 267–88; *Selected Works*, v. 284–307; John K. Leung and Y. M. Kao (eds.), *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1992), ii. 43–65.
9. See Mao's 'speaking notes (*jianghua gao*)' version translated in Roderick MacFarquhar, Timothy Cheek, and Eugene Wu (eds.), *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Council on East Asian Studies, 1989), 131–89.
10. Daniel Leese, 'Mao the Icon', in Timothy Cheek (ed.), *A Critical Introduction to Mao* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 219–39.
11. Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2005).
12. This self-subjugation is poignantly portrayed in post-Mao PRC films, such as Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Blue Kite* (1993), and Zhang Yimou's *To Live* (1994)—all widely available internationally with English subtitles.
13. See Joseph Esherick, Paul Pickowicz, and Andrew Walder (eds.), *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).
14. *Beijing Review*, 27 (6 July 1981), 10–39; Helmut Martin, *Cult & Canon: The Origins and Development of State Maoism* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1983), 180–231.
15. See Nick Knight, *Mao Zedong on Dialectical Materialism* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990).
16. See, for example, Arif Dirlik, Paul Healy, and Nick Knight (eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Mao Zedong's Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1997), and Alexander C. Cook, 'Third World Maoism', in Cheek (ed.), *Critical Introduction to Mao*, 288–312.
17. The standard references for translations of Mao's collected works are Schram (ed.), *Mao's Road to Power* (10 vols. planned with 7 published as of 2013); and for September 1949 to

December 1957, Kau and Leung (eds.), *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976*; and for 1957 and 1958 MacFarquhar, Cheek, and Wu (eds.), *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*. The official, or 'collected wisdom', edition of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* in Chinese and English as edited by the CCP and published in Beijing is widely available with a corrected edition released for Mao's centenary in 1991. Finally, full texts of the official English version of *Selected Works* are available on the Web at Mao Zedong Internet Archive: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/index.htm>.

18. Based on Timothy Cheek, 'Textually Speaking: An Assessment of Newly Available Mao Texts', in MacFarquhar, Cheek, and Wu (eds.), *Secret Speeches*, 75–103.
19. As many as 236 million copies of the first four volumes alone were published during Mao's life. Kau and Leung (eds.), *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, p. xxvi.
20. Charles Hayford, 'Mao's Journey to the West: Meanings Made of Mao', in Cheek (ed.), *Critical Introduction to Mao*, 313–31.
21. An excellent study of the sociology of American China studies is Richard Madsen, *China and the American Dream* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).
22. Dick Wilson (ed.), *Mao Tse-tung in the Scales of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).
23. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, 'Mao Matters: A Review Essay', *China Review International*, 3/1 (1996), 1–21 documents this shift in scholarship in a thoughtful review of recent studies. Good examples are Anita Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985) and Rae Yang, *Spider Eaters: A Memoirs* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).
24. Li Zhisui, with Anne Thurston, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, trans. Tai Hung-chao (New York: Random House, 1994), and Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Untold Story* (New York: Knopf, 2005).
25. Gao Hua's *Hong taiyang shi zenyang shengqide* [How the Red Sun Arose] (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2000) was a bellwether study by a Nanjing University professor. Yang Jisheng's *Mubei: Zhongugo liushi niandai dajihuang jishi* [Tombstone: A True History of the Great Famine in China in the 1960s] (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu youxian gongsi, 2008) is notable and will appear in English translation soon.
26. Nick Knight, *Rethinking Mao* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007); Rebecca Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) 19–29; Maurice Meisner, *Mao Zedong* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).
27. The notable Chinese example is Wang Hui, many of whose works have been translated: Wang Hui, *China's New Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) and Wang Hui, *The End of Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity* (London: Verso, 2011).
28. Stuart R. Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966); Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (New York: Henry Hold & Co., 1999); Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Delia Davin, *Mao Zedong* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997); Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999); Michael Lynch, *Mao* (London: Routledge, 2004) also provides a fine annotated guide to writings on, about, or by Mao for the general reader, 249–54.
29. Cheek (ed.), *Critical Introduction to Mao*.
30. Geremie Barmé, 'Red Allure and the Crimson Blindfold', *China Perspectives*, 2012:2, 29–40, part of an excellent special issue of the journal on 'Mao Today'.
31. Peronism—the economic, political, and social ideology called *Justicialismo* (social justice) associated with the rule of Juan Domingo Peron in Argentina at mid-century—is the

obvious point of comparison. See Steven Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties in Latin America: Argentine Peronism in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

32. Xiao Yanzhong, 'Recent Mao Zedong Scholarship in China', in Cheek (ed.), *Critical Introduction to Mao*, 273–87.
33. A good representative of this new wave of party history is *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi, 1949–1981* [History of the PRC, 1949–1981] (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2008) in 10 volumes featuring the work of key scholars such as Yang Kuisong, Shen Zhihua, Gao Hua, and Han Gang. See also Yang Kuisong, 'Reconsidering the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries', *China Quarterly*, 193 (2008), 102–21.
34. See Mobo Gao, *The Battle for China's Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), and Gan Yang, *Dushu* [Reading] 2007:06, 1–6.
35. Ching Kwan Lee, 'What Was Socialism to Workers? Collective Memories and Labor Politics in an Age of Reform', in C. K. Lee and Guobin Yang (eds.), *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memories in Reform China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press & Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2007), 158–9.
36. See Kevin J. O'Brien and Li Lianjiang, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
37. Guobin Yang, ' "A Portrait of Martyr Jiang Qing": The Chinese Cultural Revolution on the Internet', in Lee and Yang (ed.), *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution*, 287–316.
38. See Geremie R. Barmé, *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 19.
39. Barmé, *Shades of Mao*, 48.
40. Wang Yi (under the pen-name Xin Yuan), 'A Place in the Pantheon: Mao and Folk Religion' published in Hong Kong in 1992 and translated in Barmé, *Shades of Mao*, 195. Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
41. David J. Davies, 'Visible *Zhiqing*: The Visual Culture of Nostalgia among China's *Zhiqing Generation*', in Lee and Yang (eds.), *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution*, 166–92.
42. See Gregor Benton and Lin Chun (eds.), *Was Mao Really a Monster? The Academic Response to Chang and Halliday's 'Mao: The Unknown Story'* (London: Routledge, 2011).
43. Stuart Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 192.
44. See Kenneth Jowitt, 'The Leninist Response to National Dependency', in Jowitt (ed.), *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 1–50.
45. Timothy Cheek, *Propaganda and Culture in Mao's China: Deng Tuo and the Intelligentsia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
46. John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).
47. See 'Communism in East and Southeast Asia' in this *Handbook*. Most social histories and biographies of this period reflect this fluidity between GMD and CCP. An excellent example is in the family history *Ancestral Leaves: A Family History Through Chinese History* by Joseph Esherick (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010).
48. See Dirlik, Healy, and Knight (eds.), *Critical Perspectives*; Cook, 'Third World Maoism'; and *Slavoj Žižek Presents Mao: On Practice and Contradiction* (London: Verso, 2010).
49. Timothy Cheek, *Living with Reform: China Since 1989* (London: Zed Books, 2006), 32–53.

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PART II

GLOBAL MOMENTS

CHAPTER 5

1919

JEAN-FRANÇOIS FAYET
TRANSLATED BY STEPHEN A. SMITH

The year 1919 was one that began with hopes of world revolution, at least in Europe. Two years after the revolution in Russia, the social revolution was once again fermenting on the ruins of the empires defeated in the war. The First World War, which had set nations and empires against one another, was turning into a civil war that threatened to split societies apart. The tremors caused by the war were not confined to the defeated powers, for there were insurrectionary strikes and land occupations in Italy, campaigns against high prices in France, Britain, and the USA, general strikes in Switzerland and Catalonia, and everywhere governments came under pressure from voices on the streets. A revolutionary moment in Europe, the year 1919 also witnessed a series of revolts and protest movements which, from the Middle East to the Far East, constituted the first generalized challenge to colonial domination. Whether political, economic, social, and/or national, the expectations raised by the war were immense. The upheavals can be analysed from a geopolitical point of view in terms of the state of a particular country at the end of the war and of its socioeconomic structures. But the diversity of demands and the variety of forms of protest should not conceal the underlying synchrony of events. The war had united different peoples in the same temporal space. Impeded by censorship so long as war lasted, Bolshevik slogans were now being disseminated by refugees and soldiers travelling home in their millions. As yet, the link with the October Revolution was primarily symbolic, for the Communist (Third) International generally learned of events only after the fact even as it endeavoured to integrate them within a global theoretical framework. Nevertheless there was a sense that revolution was spreading like a contagion.

In a wider perspective, 1919 crystallized the opposition between two rival plans to reorder the world, between two universalist projects. The first was that of the communists, partisans of a revolution on the soviet model; the second was that of the victorious powers, who gathered in Paris from January to June in order to negotiate the peace treaties on the basis of a compromise between the 'Fourteen Points' of Woodrow Wilson and the claims of the victor nations. The year saw a dictatorship of the proletariat confront bourgeois democracy, a confrontation that was as much military as ideological. Since the victory

of the Entente over the empires of central Europe, communist Russia had supplanted German militarism as the principal enemy and was now the target of an international crusade in Europe. Henceforward, the 'red peril' would structure politics in a way that transcended national borders. Barely out of the First World War, the world was entering another war, one according to Eric Hobsbawm that would last thirty-one years, nothing less than a European civil war, according to Ernst Nolte. The injustices and frustrations sparked by the victors' peace, combined with the fear provoked by the revolutionary outbreaks, would ultimately favour the appearance of a third force, namely fascism, hostile to both communism and democracy. Opening in revolutionary struggle, then, the year 1919 would end in victory for counter-revolution. Communism had reached its awkward age.

The War is a Revolution, a Multitude of Revolutions

Twentieth-century communism emerged out of the Great War. Yet the war had begun by wiping out the revolutionary ideal of the nineteenth century. In August 1914 patriotic elan had swept away internationalist solidarity and struck down the Socialist International, since it had proved incapable of opposing the onset of war in spite of decades of pacifist and antimilitarist propaganda. The threat of revolution and of the 'red spectre', which bourgeois Europe had feared would emerge during any preparations for war, vanished following the 'crime of 4 August 1914', when the Social Democrats in the Reichstag voted for war credits. The rallying of German socialists was followed by their French counterparts, who proceeded to join the government, and by the majority of social-democratic parties. Only in Russia, Serbia, and Great Britain did a few parties, sparsely represented in the respective parliaments, refuse to back the 'Union sacrée'. From the first, V. I. Lenin, L. D. Trotsky, and I. O. Martov denounced the 'imperialist war'. In September the Bolshevik leader even called for the war to be transformed into a 'civil war', stating that the first duty of any revolutionary is to struggle for the defeat of their own government. The Pole, Karl Radek, the Scot, John MacLean, the Dutch Tribunist Henriette Roland-Holst, the Dutch activists Anton Pannekoek and Hermann Gorter, later known as 'council communists', the Bremen left radicals, the Berlin group of Julian Borchardt, the Swiss Fritz Platten, and the French *Vie ouvrière* group of Pierre Monatte and Alfred Rosmer—they all took the same position. Yet revolutionary defeatism found little echo, even among the handful of socialists opposed to the war. These tried to re-establish international networks at conferences organized by the socialist parties of neutral countries in Switzerland. In Germany a wing of the revolutionary movement formed in autumn 1914 around Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring, Leo Jogiches, and Rosa Luxemburg. This group, which took the name of Spartacists, nevertheless opposed the idea of splitting the labour movement. When they were expelled from the German party, along with other opponents of the war, in spring 1917 they joined the Independent

Social-Democratic Party (USPD), led by centrists such as Karl Kautsky and Hugo Haase. Although in a minority, the extreme radicals nevertheless joined what was known as the Zimmerwald Left, the nucleus of the future International they hoped to found.

The First World War was a war without precedent. Its duration and the intensity of the war effort necessitated a mobilization of all elements of society on a scale never seen before. Total war imposed enormous sacrifices on the great majority, made all the more unbearable because so many profited from it. The traditional division between home and front, between shirkers and those who sacrificed their lives, quickly became blurred, particularly once populations began to go hungry as a result of the economic blockade. National cohesion began to crumble, as economic strikes gripped many sectors in several countries. In Britain there was the movement by shop stewards and there were strikes by textile workers, in France there were strikes by metalworkers, in Germany and Austria demonstrations against shortages, and in Russia and Italy food riots. In Turin workers set up barricades. Discontent passed like a contagion from the rear to the front. At the front the final offensives ended in a bloodbath without fundamentally modifying the balance of forces. The daily experience of death and the perception of pointless sacrifice wore down the nerves of the combatants. In France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia mutinies broke out, soldiers manhandled their officers, or threatened to march on the capitals or deserted en masse, as the Italians did after the defeat at Caporetto in 1917. Usually the contestations were less a challenge to the war itself than a criticism of the way it was being conducted; and in most countries, the protests were circumscribed and authority was restored, at least for a time. In Russia the crisis ran deeper. Totally discredited, the autocratic tsarist government collapsed in the face of five days of demonstrations (23–27 February 1917) by women and workers followed by a spontaneous mutiny by the soldiers of the capital.

The form of the regime that emerged from the February Revolution was uncertain. As in 1905, soviets, that is to say councils of workers', soldiers', sailors', and later peasants' deputies, which were subject to frequent election and accountable to their constituents, appeared spontaneously. The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which sought to coordinate local soviets across Russia, comprised delegates from the Socialist Revolutionaries, the successors to the Populists (Narodniks), the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, namely the two factions of the Russian Social Democratic Party who had split in 1903 around the question of the form of the party, plus anarchists and syndicalists. The Provisional Government, which comprised liberal members of the former Duma (mainly, from the Constitutional Democratic Party), was the executive power but counted on the support of the Petrograd Soviet. The government thus consisted of a coalition of heterogeneous forces united only by their opposition to tsarism. Very much in a minority, the Bolsheviks refused all support for the Provisional Government. Upon his return from Switzerland on 3 (16) April 1917, Lenin defined the programme of the party in the 'April Theses': an immediate peace, uncompromising opposition to the bourgeois Provisional Government, and all power to the soviets. For the Bolsheviks, who did not intend that the revolution should remain at the bourgeois stage, February was only a step towards the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war. Without authority over

the state apparatus, and denied democratic legitimacy, three iterations of the Provisional governments succeeded one another between February and October, control passing from the liberals to the moderate socialists. Yet each proved unable to cope with the problems inherited from the old regime. Reforms that had been promised and the election of a Constituent Assembly to determine the shape of the new regime were postponed. Yet the government was not in a position to impose the necessary measures to compel a continuation of the war. After the disastrous June Offensive, peasants left the front en masse in order to participate in the break-up of the landlords' estates. Everywhere a process of radicalization of the masses got underway, a Bolshevization of society. In September the Bolsheviks won elections in many local soviets and the following month had a majority of delegates at the First All-Russian Conference of Factory Committees. Membership of the party rose from twenty-four thousand in January to a quarter of a million. In October, together with their allies, the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, they won a majority in the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets. By this time, the dual power of the spring had disappeared and there was a power vacuum. On 24–25 October (6–7 November, new-style), the Military Revolutionary Committee in Petrograd, directed by Trotsky, carried out a coup. However this was, according to Marc Ferro, the culmination of a vast social movement, multiform and spontaneous, a movement that encompassed different revolutions, each largely autonomous, each contributing in its own way to the dissolution of power. There was the revolt of soldiers against the conduct of their officers; peasant uprisings to seize the land; the imposition of workers' control in the factories; and the movement of non-Russian peoples for national independence. The momentary convergence of these movements was reflected in the first measures adopted by the new government of workers and peasants: a decree on land that legalized the seizure and redistribution of landed estates; the decree on peace; the decree on workers' control of production and the declaration of the rights of the peoples of Russia.

It was in Russia, the 'weakest link in the capitalist chain' according to Lenin, that an inherently global process was first victorious because of particular circumstances. Like the French Revolution before it, however, the October revolution had effects that went well beyond its territory. For the Bolsheviks, the complete victory of the socialist revolution was unimaginable without the cooperation of the more economically advanced countries. The Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR) would prove to be the first in a federation of soviet socialist republics that would eventually stretch across the globe. The Decree on Peace, published the day after the seizure of power, was intended to spur the spread of the revolution by forcing a choice upon the belligerent powers: immediate peace or revolutionary war. For Lenin, the seizure of power, exit from the war via a democratic peace, and proletarian revolutions in Europe were part of a single process. The Decree advances a position first articulated by the Petrograd Soviet in March, namely, a demand for an 'immediate peace'. This was not a socialist peace, but a 'just and democratic' peace without annexations or indemnities, and one that recognized the right of all nations to self-determination. There was no reference to class struggle or to revolution, just a belief that people would refuse to continue to fight once the secret treaties were published that revealed the imperialist aims of their governments. The

principal target of the appeal was the proletariat of the industrialized countries, and the expected result was not an end to fighting but a general uprising of the people against the capitalist system responsible for the war. But the Decree on Peace did not have the effect intended: the governments of the central European empires, like those of the Entente, refused to negotiate a just and democratic peace. German soldiers, far from rising up against their government, prepared to march on Russia. The soviet leaders were then confronted by contradictory demands: either to stabilize their regime by signing a separate peace that reinforced German imperialism or to launch a defensive revolutionary war pending the outbreak of proletarian revolution in Europe.

At the end of January 1918 troubles broke out in Budapest. A strike movement gripped factories in Vienna, then in Berlin and Leipzig. This enabled the soviets to refuse to sign a separate peace. At the end of February, however, the German army invaded Ukraine and broke through the Baltic Front. A majority emerged around Lenin in favour of signing an immediate peace, even though its terms were humiliating. For the Left Communists, such as Bukharin and Radek, and for many European revolutionaries, the treaty was seen as prioritizing Russia's national interest and betraying the world revolution. In forcing soviet leaders to choose between permanent revolution or cohabitation with capitalism, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk raised a problem that would recur thereafter, where the interests of the Soviet state were in contradiction with those of the international revolution. The signing of the Treaty in March 1918 did not provide the Bolsheviks with the respite they hoped for. Hostilities resumed when the Germans intervened militarily to sustain anti-Bolshevik governments in Finland, the Baltic, Crimea, and the Caucasus. This German advance in turn spurred the Allies to despatch military contingents to Russia, officially to defend the integrity of Russian territory. Yet the intervention of the Allies changed character in May 1918 when the Czech Legion, some forty thousand soldiers who had joined the Russian Army after becoming prisoners of war, rebelled against the Bolshevik attempt to disarm them as they crossed Russia en route to evacuation from Vladivostok. The Czech troops assisted the Socialist Revolutionaries in setting up anti-Bolshevik governments in the Volga, Urals, and western Siberia. Following the arrival of British and American troops in Arkhangel'sk and Murmansk, of French troops in Odessa and Japanese troops in eastern Siberia, the civil war in Russia became an international crusade against Bolshevism. By autumn 1918 Soviet Russia was reduced to the territory of ancient Muscovy, completely encircled militarily, and isolated by a cordon sanitaire aimed at stifling the regime economically. It was at this moment that the hoped for breakthrough arrived.

With a time lag of more than a year and with different configurations in each country—the national movement, for example, was much stronger in Austria-Hungary than in Germany—the forces that had contributed to the disintegration of Russia in 1917 now provoked the collapse of the central European empires and their allies, their armies having been in retreat since summer. The revolutionary wave began in September with a mutiny by Bulgarian soldiers in Radomir. The Turkish Army then collapsed, and was obliged to conclude an armistice on 20 October. The disintegration spread to the Austro-Hungarian Army, which withdrew from the military alliance. The national committees that took

power precipitated the break-up of the Habsburg empire: Czechoslovakia proclaimed its independence, as did the southern Slavs (Croats, Slovenes, Dalmatians) and Poles, while Austria and Hungary saw their territories severely amputated. Sometimes governments existed simultaneously, as in Hungary where alongside the Provisional Government of Count Mihály Károlyi, which was supported by the Hungarian National Council, there was a council of soldiers and a council of workers in Budapest. In Germany the revolt was initiated by sailors at Kiel who refused to fight in a war that was now lost. The mutiny spread to the ports, and demonstrations took place in Bremen, Leipzig, Hamburg, and Munich. The movement grew and radicalized as it took up the slogans of the councils of workers and soldiers. From there things unfolded very quickly: the emperor abdicated, Philipp Scheidemann proclaimed a republic from the balcony of the Reichstag, while not far away the Spartacist, Liebknecht, announced the German socialist republic. In Bavaria the councils backed a general strike and an assault on the barracks. Workers' councils appeared in Poland—in Lublin, Łódź, Warsaw, and the mining region of Dąbrowa; one also appeared in Reval (Tallinn) in Estonia. The force of these upheavals was particularly strong in the defeated countries. But the after-effects of the war made themselves felt across the continent, including countries that were victorious or had been neutral. The Dutch socialist David Winjkoop launched an appeal to form a commune in Amsterdam and a federal socialist republic of the Netherlands. On the day of the armistice, Switzerland experienced the first general strike in its history. In Zurich and Basle minority groups, the Altkommunisten and the anarchists, helped to toughen workers' demonstrations repressed by peasant soldiers. In January 1919 the workers of Catalonia went on strike for forty-three days. Strikes broke out on an unprecedented scale—in Britain in January, in the USA in February, in France and Italy, for a reduction in working hours and a rise in wages during the spring. Revolt was also stirring among the soldiers of the Entente who after the armistice were used to maintain order or to intervene in Soviet Russia. Finally, the end of the war coincided with the first wave of anti-imperialist revolts in the European colonies in which people demanded, in return for their participation in the war effort, the right to determine their own affairs.

For the Bolsheviks the world revolution was on the march. It was thus an urgent task to found a new International to establish 'the closest contact between the different parts of the revolutionary proletariat and the complete unity of the countries in which the revolution has triumphed'.[1]

Revolutions and Counter-Revolutions in Europe

The Bolsheviks, who had now assumed the name 'Communist', made great efforts to present the foundation of the Third International as a continuation of the Zimmerwald movement, in order to avoid the impression that it was an organization controlled by

Moscow designed to break Russia's isolation at a time when foreign intervention was in full swing. The foreign militants who succeeded in getting to Soviet Russia for the founding Congress were few. Of the fifty-one delegates who took part in its work, more than forty were members of the foreign sections of the Russian Communist Party, groups organized by the Bolsheviks from soldiers recruited in the prisoner-of-war camps or from radicalized refugees in Russia. In autumn 1918 some of these had returned to participate in the foundation of communist parties in their own countries. They included the Czech, Ferdinand Effenberger, the Austrian, Karl Tomann, and among the Germans, Ernst Reuter, who would become the secretary of the German Communist Party (KPD) in 1921, along with Werner Rakow, the Comintern's point man. The most striking example of the importance of these groups in the international dissemination of communism was in Hungary, where six of the eighteen members of the central committee of the Hungarian Communist Party, formed at the end of November 1918, were former prisoners of war, like Béla Kun. A Polish communist workers' party was formed in December through the unification of several socialist groups, but it was skeletal and did not manage to send a representative. Only the KPD, which was formed on the night of 31 December to 1 January 1919 by Spartacists, communist internationalists from Bremen and Hamburg, and by the Borchardt group in Berlin, looked anything like a mass party. But even then, the independents of the USPD and the revolutionary factory delegates in Berlin refused to join the new party. Moreover, the mandate that Rosa Luxemburg handed to Hugo Eberlein in the name of the central committee of the KPD ran contrary to the wishes of the Bolsheviks in that it considered it premature to found a new International in the absence of true communist parties in Europe, although it did not renounce this move in principle. Much friendly pressure and many incidents enabled the Bolsheviks to overcome the reservations of the German delegate to the first Congress who abstained from voting against the foundation of the International, an act that was otherwise carried by the delegates. Communists thus became a global party. Nevertheless the International remained essentially a symbol, an expression of solidarity with the soviet republic.

According to the analysis of the Third International, the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war marked the onset of the communist revolution. 'The task of the proletariat now is to seize state power.'[2] Concretely, the revolution consisted in destroying the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie and organizing a new proletarian state apparatus in the form of a government of workers' councils. The tactic envisaged was mass action by the proletariat, including armed struggle. The recourse to civil war, understood as being the inevitable culmination of class struggle where crisis had become acute, was a component element in the history of Bolshevism and the revolutionary movement in imperial Russia more broadly. Civil war, however, was scarcely an element in the arsenal of the European Social Democrats, above all in Germany. During her imprisonment, Rosa Luxemburg wrote several essays somewhat critical of the Russian Revolution, and in particular she reproached the Bolsheviks for their use of violence and for the Red Terror that had been launched by the Cheka. The Bolshevik dictatorship, she noted, was the 'almost inevitable result of a succession of dramatic circumstances including

the shortcomings of the German proletariat and the occupation of Russia by German imperialism'; yet 'the danger begins only when they make a virtue of necessity and want to freeze into a complete theoretical system all the tactics forced upon them by these fatal circumstances, and want to recommend them to the international proletariat as a model of socialist tactics'.[3] In an article that served as the programme of the Spartacist League, she subsequently declared that the 'Spartacist League will never undertake a conquest of power other than via the clear and unequivocal will of the great majority of the proletarian masses of Germany'.[4] In reality, the uprising of January 1919, far from being a planned insurrection directed by the young German Communist Party, was the culmination of spontaneous clashes between revolutionaries and the government that had been going on for over a month. These clashes made the Spartacist leadership nervous, but they were supported by the party base, which comprised young workers who wished to pass immediately to the social revolution, and by the USPD which wished to replace the SPD at the head of the government.

But was it not already too late? Within months the state strengthened itself substantially. Profiting from his dual role as Chancellor of the Reich and president of the council of people's commissars, Friedrich Ebert, leader of the Social Democrats, set the foundations of a new regime even before the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. The signing of an agreement with the army, followed by one between the trade unions and the employers, guaranteed the continuity of the old social structure, the bureaucracy of the Wilhelmine state, and, above all, the military hierarchy. With the support of the Minister of War, the socialist Gustav Noske, a paramilitary Freikorps was formed, composed of volunteers trained by officers and this proceeded to disarm the civilian population of the capital. Faced by eighty thousand soldiers stationed by General W. Lütwitz around Berlin, the workers could count on only a few units of the League of Red Soldiers and the security forces in the capital under the command of Emil Eichhorn. It was the dismissal of Eichhorn, USPD prefect of police, that served as a pretext for the outbreak of hostilities. Refusing to comply, Eichhorn gained the support of all left organizations in Berlin, which called for demonstrations against the government. For Rosa Luxemburg it was simply a protest movement, but the representatives of the USPD in Berlin, and above all the revolutionary factory delegates, felt that it was necessary to respond to the mass mobilization—caused partly by the abandonment of promises to socialize industry—by seeking to overturn the government. Fearing they would be outflanked by the base, Wilhelm Pieck and Karl Liebknecht, leaders of the newly founded KPD, approved—against the advice of the party's central committee—the formation of a revolutionary committee to direct operations. After six days of clashes, the uprising in Berlin was bloodily suppressed, leaving the young communist power crushed and condemned to the underground. On 15 January, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were arrested and summarily executed. Hundreds of fatalities ensued. Clashes between the revolutionaries and the government forces continued for several months across the country. As in Berlin, these were more revolts than armed insurrections and the local authorities almost everywhere were able to restore order without calling in the army. In Bremen and Düsseldorf, where left-wing groups were strong within the councils, the revolutionaries

came to power for a few weeks. Solidarity from the Ruhr miners suggested that the movement might be coordinated on a national scale. In Bremen the revolutionaries were beaten before such coordination could be achieved, but in Leipzig and above all in central Germany the revolutionaries reacted at the end of February when a general strike received massive support. In early March the movement in Berlin was smashed by Noske's troops with more than a thousand victims, among them Leo Jogiches, KPD organizer and lover of the murdered Rosa Luxemburg. In April the Freikorps conducted punitive operations in Düsseldorf, Magdeburg, Braunschweig, Leipzig, and elsewhere. Nevertheless the social revolution was gaining ground in Bavaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine—where anarchists had organized rural communes (the Makhnovshchina)—and soon in Italy. This was the spring of the council movement.

In Bavaria the assassination by an extreme right-wing officer of the leader of the November revolution, the independent socialist Kurt Eisner, led to the proclamation in April of a republic of councils. Supported at first by a diverse coalition of independent socialists, anarchists, and non-party intellectuals (among them the writer, Ernst Toller), the republic passed into communist control for two weeks. Its programme was that of the Spartacist League but its activities concentrated on organizing a red army and the struggle against the forces of counter-revolution. The repression of the council republic was particularly violent. The army and the Freikorps purged Munich of 'reds' with machine guns. In Hungary the commune lasted rather longer at 143 days. Under constant pressure for months from demonstrations and from a Communist Party that had grown to forty thousand members by March, and faced by the imminent occupation of part of the territory of the republic by the Entente, the Hungarian socialists who separated from the party's right wing signed an agreement to govern with the communists whose principal members were in jail. This pact of 21 May 1919 entailed a fusion of the socialist and communist parties, the formation of a government based on councils of workers and peasants, the annulment of elections to a Constituent Assembly, and the creation of a proletarian army. Twelve communists entered the revolutionary council of government which was officially led by a socialist, but its true leader was Béla Kun, minister of foreign affairs. The first measures adopted—the creation of a new currency, which was rapidly devalued, a ban on private trade, and the abolition of private property in all means of production—aggravated the economic chaos inherited from the old regime. In the countryside the nationalization of large estates frustrated the peasants who had begun to divide up the land. Very quickly, the collapse of production and the disappearance of a market in food led to poverty, rationing, and inflation. The government was torn between its right wing, the socialists, and its left, those communists closest to Tibor Szamuely. The latter headed the security services and the paramilitaries known as Lenin's Boys, which were notorious for their abuses, provoking protest from socialist ministers as well as widespread tension in the population. If the government retained any popular support it was because it put up national resistance to the Entente and to intervention by the Romanian and Czech armies. From the start, the Hungarian council republic was implicated in a war in which the victory of socialist revolution or of counter-revolution was at stake in central Europe and the Balkans. The Hungarian

communists received support from foreigners, including a brigade organized in Vienna, and hoped to join forces with soviet Ukraine, which was then led by C. Rakovskii, who headed the southern bureau of the Comintern. But there was to be no breakthrough. Almost at once, the Hungarian Army, composed of volunteers and of conscripts chosen by the trade unions, crumbled in the face of the Romanian Army. For its part, the Red Army in Ukraine was forced to retreat before the forces of A. I. Denikin, who settled comfortably on soviet territory in spite of resistance from Makhno's insurrectionary guerrillas. At the end of April, Romanian troops, supported from the 1 May by the Czechs, threatened the Hungarian capital. This sparked an upsurge on the part of the workers of Budapest, more than forty thousand of whom enrolled in the Red Army, following an appeal from Kun. In June the Hungarian Army managed to roll back the Romanian and Czech troops. On 16 June, with assistance from some Hungarians, the Slovakian republic of councils was proclaimed at Presov. But the counter-offensive of the Hungarian Red Army ground to a halt following a peasant uprising in the west of the country and a railway workers' strike. On 29 June the Slovakian council of republics was wiped out by the Czech Army. In Hungary, despite the resignation of Kun and his colleagues, who fled to Vienna, fighting continued until 6 August, when Romanian forces took over Budapest. The repression meted out against revolutionaries by Admiral Miklos Horthy's forces ended in several thousand executions and tens of thousands of arrests.

Although theoretically a victor power, Italy found itself in a situation very similar to that of the defeated powers. Frustrated in its territorial ambitions, the government was confronted in the spring by a series of wild strikes against the cost of living. Hundreds of shops and warehouses were pillaged in Forli, Milan, and Florence, where a republic of soviets was declared that lasted all of three days. The crisis got worse with the demobilization of war industries, provoking true proletarian revolts. Peasants returning from the front occupied the latifundia in Lazio, and in the Po Valley landless labourers occupied the lands of large tenant farmers, the red flag at their head. Smallholders and day labourers organized cooperatives and unions while the landowners and industrialists financed private militias, among them the combat units, or fasces, formed by Benito Mussolini in March. The swing of the pendulum from revolution to counter-revolution was particularly marked in Italy where two years of social struggle concluded with the fascists coming to power. However, elsewhere repression was as common as protest in 1919: the British police charged demonstrators in the Battle of George Square in Glasgow; in Buenos Aires the repression of a general strike in the tragic week led to the death of over two hundred workers; in Switzerland strike leaders were jailed; in the USA anarchists and other radicals (including Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman) were expelled; in Romania and Yugoslavia demonstrations were suppressed. Repression also affected Austria, where the Communist Party, which had refused an insurrection in spite of pressure from Hungary, was provoked into action by the Social Democratic minister of the interior and then drowned in blood. The culture of violence inherited from the war was to permeate European society for a very long time.

Anti-Imperialist Contestation

The significance of the October revolution was very different in the East than in Europe. For populations under colonial rule, communism crystallized aspirations for national independence. This was paradoxical at first sight, since Marxism as an internationalist ideology did not favour nationalism. Yet Russia was a multinational state and Lenin from the start of the war challenged those Marxists who refused to integrate the national question into their tactics. For him, recognition of the right of peoples to self-determination was not an end in itself but a means to reinforce the class struggle. Nationalist movements proved important in precipitating the dissolution of the tsarist empire and the fall of the Provisional Government. The issue proved to be even more critical in the case of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. Aspirations to national independence were also significant in the United Kingdom, which was confronted in 1916 by the uprising in Ireland, then by real civil war from 1919. Nationalist movements spread from Europe to the colonies, and the skill of the Bolsheviks lay in assimilating the colonial question to the national question and re-emphasizing the distinction between oppressor states and oppressed nations (colonized or minority peoples), a distinction that Lenin considered to be at the heart of imperialism. The anti-colonial policy of the Soviets was thus an extension of their nationalities policy. Both were seen as preliminaries to the socialist revolution. The Decree of 2 (15) November 1917 on the right of the peoples of Russia to secede lent credibility to the Bolsheviks' anti-imperialist stance. They published the secret treaties that inter alia envisaged the annexation of Constantinople by Russia and proceeded to renounce the rights acquired by tsarist Russia in Persia, Afghanistan, and China. They also launched an appeal to 'all the toiling Muslims of Russia and the East' to throw off the yoke of imperialism, which was soon extended to Arabs, Turks, and Hindus. This appeal was not only addressed to the former subjects of the tsar but also to peoples colonized by the Western powers and in those states characterized as 'formally independent', such as Turkey, China, or Persia. The diversity of the political status of these countries in the Bolsheviks' eyes merely masked the common reality of their subordination to Western capitalism. The Bolsheviks saw national liberation movements as an emanation of the bourgeois stage of the revolution and did not think they could achieve emancipation from colonialism by themselves. 'Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia. The hour of the proletarian dictatorship in Europe will for you mark the hour of your deliverance.'[5] Yet the colonies were also seen as the weak point in the capitalist system and it was useful, especially in a context when the imperialist powers had launched a general offensive against the soviet republic, to build a bridge between the struggles of workers in the West and those of the masses in the East. After the defeat of the Central Powers, the British occupied parts of Turkey, the Caucasus, Persia, and central Asia. In the East the Japanese and the White army of Admiral A. V. Kolchak blocked Soviet access to the Far East.

The war had fomented national aspirations in the colonies. Colonial troops had fought on Europe's battlefields. Local economies had participated in the war effort of

the metropolis. In return, the peoples of the colonies now demanded that the principle of self-determination, enunciated by Woodrow Wilson, be implemented, or at least that their political status be upgraded. It was on the US president, rather than on the Soviets, that the hopes of the national liberation movements were placed, as is testified by the visits made to Paris during the peace negotiations by nationalist leaders such as Hồ Chí Minh. The extension of the right of self-determination to the peoples of the colonies hardly figured in the plans of the British and French, who favoured limiting this right to the peoples of Europe. Far from wishing to renounce their colonies, the victorious powers intended to annex new territories that had belonged to the defeated empires, and this provoked a series of nationalist revolts in the Middle and Far East. It was the gap between the principles proclaimed by Wilson and the policies embodied in the peace treaties that allowed the Soviets to get closer to nationalist movements that had once been alien to them.

In Egypt, which had officially become a British protectorate in 1914, a nationalist revolt erupted on 9 March 1919, led by the Wafd Party of Saad Zaghloul in response to the refusal of the metropolis to consider independence. The explosion of popular anger that resulted from the arrest and deportation to Malta of the Wafd leadership spread to several regions, then to different religious communities and finally to all sections of the population, thus assuming the form of a vast revolution. The repression carried out by the British under General Allenby led to thousands of deaths. After being freed, Saad Zaghloul went to Versailles but was unable to prevent international recognition for a British protectorate in Egypt. Simultaneously, the enactment of new repressive laws in India triggered a resurgence of nationalist activity in that country. Mahatma Gandhi, the head of the Indian National Congress, began a *satyâgraha*—mass non-violent action—to protest against the exile of two nationalist leaders. The British responded with the massacre at Amritsar in Punjab: almost four hundred were killed and over one thousand wounded. Uprisings followed in Bombay, Calcutta, Ahmedabad, and Delhi. In April, too, the young king Amanullah renounced the treaty signed by his predecessor that had made Afghanistan a British dependency. Determined to separate his country from the British sphere of influence, Amanullah declared war on the British in May. British troops succeeded in crushing the Afghan forces, but subsequently had the greatest difficulty containing revolts by Pashtun tribes in Waziristan. In this mountainous region on the southeast frontier of Afghanistan, which had been incorporated into the empire in 1893, the British resorted to aerial bombardments, as they would do the following year during the tribal uprising in Mesopotamia to defeat the combatants. The British withdrew from Afghanistan owing to the conflicts that broke out in India, which allowed the Soviets for the first time to apply a policy that accorded with both the national and international interests of the RSFSR. The support that they offered to the 'only existing independent Muslim state' (Lenin, November 1919) weakened British imperialism, but it also accorded with Russian national interests, which had been directed against the British in this region since the nineteenth century. The Soviets pursued a similar policy in Persia. Having renounced the rights Russia had gained in 1907 as a result of the Anglo-Russian Convention, the Soviet government condemned the Anglo-Persian

Agreement of 1919, which placed the entire country under British influence. British troops operating in the Caucasus and central Asia blocked the first emissaries sent by the Soviets to Persia, but in May 1920, after the defeat of White leaders Kolchak and Denikin and the partial withdrawal by the British, the Soviets sent an expeditionary corps to Enzeli, a port on the Caspian Sea, to support the republic of Gilan led by Kūchik Khān, a revolutionary nationalist opposed to the government in Tehran. The Soviets also supported the nationalist movement in Tabriz, which proclaimed the secession of the republic of Azerbaijan from Persia.[6] The situation was very similar in Turkey, which was under partial occupation by the Allies. There the nationalist movement took the form of a revolt against British policy. In August 1919 Mustapha Kemal, commander of the Turkish army in Anatolia, repudiated the authority of the Sultan in Constantinople and assumed the leadership of nationalist resistance to the occupying Allied forces. The Soviets, who supported Turkish resistance to Allied demands to open the Black Sea straits and gain free access for their warships, gave their support to Kemal's government in its struggle against a foreign imperialism that threatened both countries.

The same configuration was to be found in the Far East where the Japanese empire, in occupation of the maritime provinces of Siberia, was the common enemy of the Soviets and local nationalists. In Korea, which had been annexed by Japan in 1910, a declaration of independence signed by thirty-three representatives of political and religious groups provoked a huge popular uprising across the country. A civil government replaced the military government. But the non-violent demonstrations that unfolded at the funeral of the last king of the Chosŏn dynasty provided the Japanese with a pretext to unleash repression. Those who managed to escape went into exile in Shanghai where they formed a provisional republican government. Others returned to Russia where there were already important communities of Korean workers organized into national soviets.[7] One party in the government-in-exile, which regrouped the forces of the opposition from September, hoped to obtain satisfaction by sending a delegate to Versailles. For others, such as Yi Donghwi, co-founder of the Union of Korean Socialists and later of the Korean Communist Party, Korean independence henceforth depended on friendship with Russia. The rapprochement of nationalists with Soviet Russia was even more marked in China, where the upholding by the Versailles peacemakers of the economic and judicial privileges enjoyed by the Western powers in China and the transfer of German privileges in Shandong province to the Japanese aroused violent protests, known as the May Fourth Movement. This movement of students, workers, and merchants, considered by most historians to be the origin of communism in China, encouraged the diffusion of Bolshevik ideas among progressive intellectuals such as Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao.

Conforming to the foreign policy interests of Soviet Russia, the support given by the RSFSR to nationalists fighting imperialism aroused some criticism from foreign militants. During preliminary discussions to prepare the Congress of the Peoples of the East, Giacinto Serrati, leader of the maximalist wing of the Italian Socialist Party, worried that an appeal to the bourgeois or feudal forces in India, Egypt, or elsewhere would compromise communist international work. The debate rebounded during the Second

Congress of the Comintern, at which delegates from India, China, Korea, Turkey, and the Dutch East Indies, as well as from the Caucasus and central Asia, participated for the first time. The commission on the national and colonial question discussed theses by Lenin and by the Indian delegate, M. N. Roy. Both theses emphasized that the liberation of oppressed peoples would require world proletarian revolution, but contrary to Lenin, Roy distinguished clearly between 'bourgeois-democratic' movements that 'do not reflect the aspirations of the masses' and 'movements of the poor, illiterate peasants and workers'. According to him, the communist vanguard, however small, should never be subordinated to 'bourgeois democratic' movements, even if these were branded as 'national-revolutionary'.[8] The theses of M. N. Roy were amended and adopted as supplementary to those of Lenin, but it was Lenin's conception that became dominant, as the First Congress of the Peoples of the East demonstrated when it met in Baku in September 1920. A total of 1,891 delegates from 37 nationalities, among them 1,273 communists, responded to the invitation of the Comintern executive committee to communists and to 'representatives of international revolutionary organizations and individuals with an anti-imperialist orientation but no party affiliation in the countries of the East'.[9] Everyone applauded when Grigorii Zinoviev, chair of the newly created Comintern, called on the delegates to wage a holy war against British imperialism, but behind this unanimity there were political differences. Turkey illustrated the difficulties faced by the Soviets when choosing allies and the problems that could ensue for communists in the east. The Turkish delegation comprised 235 people, ranging from communists to representatives of Mustafa Kemal's nationalist government, via representatives of religious and Pan-Turkic groups. Upon their return from the Congress, the two principal representatives of Turkish communism, along with sixteen others, were seized and drowned by Kemal's agents. The Turkish communist movement, one of the most dynamic in the region, was thereby eliminated. Yet this did not prevent the Soviet Union signing a friendship treaty with Turkey on 16 March 1921. Disillusion on the part of communists in the east would be even greater in China, where the nationalists of the Guomindang, long supervised by Soviet advisers, would turn against the Chinese Communist Party in 1927. The subordination of communists to 'revolutionary national' movements that was feared by Roy was evident in the way the Soviets conducted the fight against global imperialism. Even in Russia, criticism began to be raised of 'soviet colonialism' by Georgii Safarov and Khristian Rakowski, as territories from Azerbaijan in the spring of 1920 to Turkestan, Georgia, and Armenia were reincorporated into the Soviet state.

Conclusion

Despite the ebbing of the first revolutionary tide and the violent repression that it provoked, the hopes aroused by the October Revolution did not disappear. Enthusiasm remained, as can be seen in the formation of communist parties and groups in most countries in the Americas and Asia. To some degree, 'communism was in fashion', to

use an expression from the preamble to the 'Twenty-One Conditions' that regulated adhesion to the Comintern. Even if it was often a minority phenomenon, Bolshevism seemed to be prevailing, especially among the younger generation, over other currents in the labour movement such as anarchism, which had been much more influential than Marxism in some countries before the war, and social democracy, which had been discredited because of its support for the war and its role in the repression. The failure of the council movement was blamed on the fact that revolutionaries had maintained the alliance with moderate socialists. So it was considered necessary to build authentic communist parties through a process of purges and splits in the labour movement. If the revolution had failed at the barricades, it was now advancing on the bayonets of the Red Army. Although surprised by the attack of the Polish army of Józef Piłsudski, Poland's Chief of State, in April 1920, the Red Army succeeded during the summer in getting to the gates of Warsaw. But hopes for a revolution in Poland proved short lived. Polish workers did not rise up against their government and Soviet troops were forced to retreat behind the Curzon line. Disillusionment in Germany would be even greater following defeats of the uprising of March 1921 and of October 1923. The period of capitalist destabilization was passing, as the Third Congress of the Comintern recognized.

In Soviet Russia itself the Bolsheviks won the civil war but the country was left utterly isolated and exhausted, the population on the edge of starvation, and society bruised by violence. Worker demonstrations and the Kronstadt rebels denounced the usurpation of power by the Bolsheviks by reference to the ideals of 1917, but they were suppressed. Menaced by peasant insurrection, the regime authorized the re-establishment of an embryonic market economy (NEP). Having aroused so much enthusiasm across the world in 1919, Soviet power was becoming little more than a label in Russia, a cover for a dictatorship of the party that was becoming steadily more monolithic.

Notes

1. Letter of Invitation to the Foundation Congress of the Third International. <http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/1st-congress/invitation.htm>.
2. Letter of Invitation.
3. Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution* (1918). <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/russian-revolution/ch08.htm>.
4. 'Was will der Spartakusbund?', *Rote Fahne*, 14 December 1918.
5. 'Manifeste du premier congrès de l'Internationale communiste aux prolétaires du monde entier', *Thèses, manifestes et résolutions*, 32. This ringing phrase is missing from the English translation at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1919/03/manifesto.html>.
6. Vladimir Genis, *Krasnaia Persiia. Bol'sheviki v Giliane, 1920–21: Dokumental'naia khronika*, (Moscow: MNPI, 2000).
7. *VKP (b), Komintern i Koreia, 1918–41* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2007), 4–6.
8. M. N. Roy, *Selected Works of M. N. Roy*, T.1, 1917–22 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 165–8.
9. Jane Degras, *The Communist International 1919–1943, Documents*, vol. 1–3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1956–65), 105–9.

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CHAPTER 6

1936

TIM REES

In his diary entry for 21 December 1936, Georgi Dimitrov, the general secretary of the Communist International (Comintern), briefly recorded his attendance at a party to celebrate the fifty-seventh birthday of Joseph Stalin. He listed the names of twenty-two prominent men who were present, drawn from the highest reaches of the political and military establishments of the USSR and the international communist movement—while noting the absence of Stalin's children, any representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Narkomindel), and Lev Mekhlis from the Soviet Party Central Committee. The entry concluded with the information that celebrations went on until five-thirty the following morning. Dimitrov's description reflected the fact that this was as much a state as a social occasion, one repeated annually that was symbolic of the ways in which communism had come to function at its highest levels by this time. If they had so chosen, the guests could have looked back on a year in the life of the Soviet Union and the wider communist movement that had been little short of momentous.[1]

The bewildering range of developments over the year was rooted in the transformation under way in Soviet domestic and foreign affairs, and in the extent of communist involvement in the global social and political crises of the time. In the domestic sphere a new constitution for the Soviet Union had been announced in November which celebrated the huge changes brought about under the Five-Year Plans (1928–32 1933–7). Theoretically, it enshrined a range of health, education, social security and pension rights, plus racial and gender equality, for all Soviet citizens. In foreign relations, the final ratification in May of a treaty of mutual assistance with France, negotiated the previous year, continued the main thrust of Soviet foreign policy towards a rapprochement with the Western democracies in the face of a growing threat from Germany and Japan. Within the international communist movement, the participation of the Spanish and French communists in successful electoral pacts with non-communist parties in February and May was also an important step in implementing the popular front policy that had been adopted by the Comintern at its Seventh Congress in July–August 1935. This developed further in December 1936 when a halt to civil conflict in China allowed an anti-Japanese alliance to be formed between the Chinese Communist Party

(CCP) and the Chinese Nationalist Party, the Guomindang. But the deepest and most far-reaching communist involvement would prove to be in Spain, where the civil war had broken out in July.

The Spanish crisis became one of the great centre points of communist concern, prompting three unprecedented actions: direct Soviet intervention in the conflict in support of the Spanish Republic; the participation of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) in the coalition formed by Largo Caballero, leader of the Socialist Party, making it the first party to enter a 'bourgeois' government; and the formation by the Comintern of International Brigades of volunteers to fight in the war. As Stalin's birthday party was taking place in Moscow, Soviet military supplies and advisers, along with international brigaders and communist militia units, were playing a prominent role in the desperate defence of Madrid against General Franco's Nationalist forces.

On a more everyday level, communists on every continent were engaged in a whole spectrum of activities that included political demonstrations, electoral campaigning, strikes and hunger marches, civil rights campaigns on behalf of women and ethnic minorities, peasant agitation and land seizures, fundraising for solidarity and relief organizations, anti-colonial struggles, and armed and passive resistance to fascist and right-wing dictatorships. Soviet and Comintern propaganda strongly promoted this activism, presented in terms of heroic images of model workers (Stakhanovites) striving to build socialism and defiant anti-fascist slogans borrowed from the struggle in Spain: 'No pasarán' (They shall not pass).

The fact that the Soviet Union was now an established state and international power, and that communism had a political presence across the globe, meant that hostility also reached new heights in 1936. The Nationalists in Spain were quick to claim that their struggle against the government of the Republic was an attempt to forestall a communist takeover, while in China Chiang Kai-shek was forced to agree an alliance with the Chinese Communist Party, only reluctantly accepting a truce after the Xi'an incident of 12 December 1936 at a point when he was still trying to destroy the CCP as a political and military force following the 'Long March' of 1934. The Western powers remained wary of closer relations with the Soviet Union and their reaction to events around the world continued to be conditioned by a fear of communism. Meanwhile fascist and authoritarian regimes everywhere justified their existence in terms of the need to eliminate the contagion of Bolshevism. In December, Germany and Japan formalized this commitment by creating the Anti-Comintern Pact which was dedicated to the eradication of the communist threat.

The 1936 Constitution described the Soviet Union for the first time as a 'socialist society', rhetorically fulfilling the aim of building socialism in one country, as Stalin had promised. It was designed to give hope to communists everywhere that creating a socialist state was possible. Yet the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic remained the only regimes with communist governments. And for all the celebration of their achievements, and the successes claimed by some communist parties elsewhere, the broader picture was more pessimistic. The Soviet Union was isolated and threatened by powerful, militaristic neighbours, economic progress stumbled with a sharp

downturn in industrial output and a poor harvest, and the growing prominence of communists in some countries was more than balanced by the outright destruction or enduring weakness of communist parties elsewhere. This sense of threat to the Soviet regime and to communism more generally exerted a powerful influence. Consequently, the mood among communists in 1936 was as often defensive as optimistic. The sense that the advance of communism had stalled, and that its existence was even imperilled, helped fuel introspection and an obsession with vigilance against enemies, both external and internal.

Internal disputes among communists, finding scapegoats for failure, and self-inflicted violence were by no means new, but these began to take an extreme turn in 1936. The principal sign of this came in August with the sensational show trial in Moscow of sixteen former opponents of Stalin within the Soviet Communist Party—known at this point as the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) (VKP(B))—including the old Bolsheviks Lev Kamenev and Grigorii Zinoviev. Accused of being at the heart of a 'terrorist centre' of 'saboteurs, traitors, and spies' responsible for the murder in 1934 of the Leningrad party leader, Sergei Kirov, and also of planning to murder Stalin and others, they pleaded guilty and were executed. This was the opening phase of what subsequently become known as the 'Great Terror' or the 'Ezhovshchina', after Nikolai Ezhov, who was appointed commissar for internal affairs, head of the NKVD, in September. The drive to root out undesirables, 'anti-Soviet elements', and political opponents, both real and imagined, gathered pace in the final months of 1936. It would reach its height in 1937–8, involving the mass imprisonment and execution of hundreds of thousands of individuals charged with 'wrecking', 'sabotage', 'espionage', 'Trotskyism', and 'anti-Soviet agitation'. The victims would spread to include Soviet and Mongolian officials and party members, foreign communists, dissenters, intellectuals, army officers, national minorities, political exiles, the clergy, and peasants. While no group or individual was automatically immune, given the unprecedented scale of the violence, what was most striking was the degree to which apparently loyal Soviet apparatchiks and members of Communist Party hierarchies up to the highest levels were targeted. The party-goers named in Dimitrov's diary would not go unaffected: over the next three years, ten of the attendees would die—either by execution or through suicide.[2]

Instability within the Soviet regime had its roots in the conditions created by the policies that had been pursued to transform the country into an industrialized and, supposedly, socialist state. Socio-economic change since 1928 had been extremely rapid, albeit at a tremendous human cost, with huge disruption and suffering accompanying the forced collectivization of agriculture, mass migration to the new industrial cities, and increasing use of forced labour. An economic crisis in 1932–3, which included a devastating famine, was followed by considerable improvements to economic output, food supplies, the availability of consumer goods, education, and urban housing. But in 1936 there was a further economic downturn and widespread disruption in both output and the distribution of goods. Popular discontent during the period of the First Five-Year Plan (1928–32) had been ruthlessly dealt with by the police and security forces, with indiscriminate campaigns against 'kulaks', 'vagabonds', social undesirables', and

'criminals' and other groups considered dangerous to social and political stability. Fear of popular unrest amidst a newly developing crisis deepened tensions within the system of government and economic planning, particularly between the central government and networks of local political and administrative managers. Charges of incompetence, corruption, and deliberate sabotage had been directed at officials before, but the new crisis was the backdrop to a much more widespread search for those supposedly responsible for failure. This atmosphere of mutual suspicion deepened during 1936, creating the conditions for what was, in effect, an incipient power struggle within the Soviet political and administrative system—albeit one that was far from clear-cut in nature and that required a series of initiatives to fully develop, including from within the highest reaches of the government.[3]

A contributing factor to the economic problems of 1936 was an increase in armaments production. This was prompted by the fear of a growing military threat to the Soviet Union from Germany and Japan. Up to the early 1930s the Soviet government had sought to preserve independence amid surrounding hostile 'capitalist' states and avoid entanglements in the conventional system of international relations, including membership of the League of Nations. Following the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931 and the rise of the Nazis to power in 1933, however, there were pressures for the Soviet Union to act more as a conventional state in the preservation of its security. The People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Maxim Litvinov, argued successfully that the Soviet Union needed to pursue a policy of collective security to contain the threats from Germany and Japan by seeking allies among the Western states. Joining the League of Nations and negotiating mutual assistance pacts with France and Czechoslovakia were the principal gains by 1936. In the Far East the Soviet Union retained contact with Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang regime, despite its continued attacks on the Chinese Communists, in an attempt to secure an alliance with China against a possible Japanese attack. The rationale for this about-face was pragmatic and not without its critics, who questioned whether there was a serious distinction between the dictatorships and 'bourgeois' democracies in terms of their antagonism towards communism.

Whether collective security was achievable, and whether it might actually weaken the Soviet Union at a time when its economic and military strength was still developing, was a serious dilemma that underlay Soviet foreign relations throughout 1936. The fact that the Western powers maintained continuing relations with Germany and Italy under the policy of appeasement, and that the British government in particular remained strongly anti-communist, divided opinion in the Soviet government. The delay in ratifying the French treaty only added to this uncertainty, but a series of developments throughout the year further exacerbated Soviet insecurities. A forewarning had been the failure of the Western powers to act decisively over the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, but this was followed by equal Anglo-French inaction in the face of the German reoccupation of the Rhineland in March 1936. Yet by far the most significant foreign policy challenge faced by the Soviet Union was the wholly unexpected outbreak of civil war in Spain in July 1936.

Initially, the Soviet government largely ignored the conflict, but it was drawn in when it became clear that the Germans and Italians were actively intervening on the

side of the Nationalist insurgents. Diplomatic relations were only established with the Republican government in August 1936 when a Soviet embassy was finally created in Madrid. The French government under Léon Blum withdrew the early promise of aid to the Republic and instead, with British urging, proposed a non-intervention agreement among outside powers to contain the conflict to Spain. The Soviet Union joined this on 23 August 1936, though it proved to be a farce as no serious attempt was made to prevent the flow of arms and troops to the Nationalists. Even so, the Soviet representative on the Non-Intervention Committee, Ivan Maisky, remained in place. Meanwhile, the continued escalation in the fighting and early military successes by the Nationalists, combined with requests for military support from the Spanish government, provided the context in which the Soviet government—after much agonized indecision—decided to intervene at the end of September 1936. The provision of military equipment and advisers took place under the code name 'Operation X', with Soviet arms supplies (paid for with the Spanish government's gold reserves) first arriving at the port of Cartagena on 15 October 1936, followed by pilots and tank crews, plus representatives of the Soviet security services. The Soviet Union was therefore in a position of simultaneously promoting collective security while secretly acting unilaterally. This was something of a gamble, involving conflicting priorities and with no certainty to the likely outcome.

The position of the wider international communist movement was no less precarious. Though the goal of worldwide Bolshevik revolution remained a touchstone of communist politics, by 1936 this seemed a very distant prospect. After 1928 the Comintern had adopted the policy of 'class against class', which had committed communist parties to a revolutionary offensive and to attacking their anarchist and socialist rivals for working-class support. However, from the early 1930s communist parties had suffered a series of defeats as dictatorial regimes took power around the globe. Sixty-five parties were officially represented at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in July–August 1935 with a total notional membership of 3,141,000—including 785,000 in 'capitalist' countries—but in reality a great many of these existed only in name or had tiny memberships. The most disastrous loss had been the German Communist Party (KPD), once the largest outside the Soviet Union, which had been crushed by the Nazis. A similar fate had befallen a whole series of parties in Southern, Eastern, and Central Europe, Japan, much of South America (including Brazil where the party was banned in 1935), and in most colonial territories in Africa and Asia. Prison camps and exile were consequently the common locations of party members in these areas. An exception was within French colonial territories, where imprisoned communists were freed in an amnesty of August 1936. In China, following the Long March and continued attacks by the Guomindang, the CCP had been reduced to around 40,000 members. By 1936 communist parties fared best under liberal states in Western Europe and the Americas where they could recruit and operate openly, including in Mexico where the party was actually legalized in 1935. In early 1936 the Spanish Communist Party was able to campaign publicly once again, having been suppressed following its participation in an abortive rising against the conservative government in October 1934.[4] The largest parties were in France and Czechoslovakia, but memberships everywhere were unstable and fluctuated wildly. If

there was a 'typical' communist, it was most likely to be a relatively young male from a working-class or peasant background, with no previous political affiliation.

The response of the Comintern to this crisis was to turn towards the popular front strategy, formally adopted at the Seventh Congress. The defeat of fascism and the defence of the Soviet Union became the primary tasks of communist parties everywhere, ostensibly bringing the policies of the Comintern into line with those of Soviet foreign policy. Communist parties were encouraged to focus upon the day-to-day interests of workers, to create political alliances with other 'anti-fascist' political parties, and to defend democracy as a bulwark against dictatorship. The pressure to alter tack had largely arisen from the French and Czech parties which, in 1934–5, were already pressing for change and which had opened negotiations with the socialist parties in those countries for joint action. Nevertheless, this was a controversial change of direction, since it appeared to repudiate revolution as the main goal of communists, to the extent that Earl Browder, leader of the Communist Party of the USA, facetiously suggested that communist parties might as well be dissolved if all that mattered was being anti-fascist. In fact, the ambiguous nature of the strategy was evident at the Seventh Congress, where Dimitrov and others insisted that this was a tactical change and that proletarian revolution remained the ultimate goal. It was effectively left open as to whether, given the right circumstances, a more revolutionary path could still be followed.

The Comintern tried to address these concerns by stressing the need for member parties to act with greater autonomy and to take decisions in the light of their own local conditions. By 1936 only three parties had Comintern advisers attached to them (the Belgian, French, and Spanish), though significantly two were in countries which particularly preoccupied the Comintern. However, greater local autonomy could clash with the wider goals of Soviet strategy and communist unity. How and with whom were anti-fascist alliances to be constructed, for example? The central assumption was to seek working-class unity, which in the European context largely signified seeking accommodations with the socialist parties that communists had previously attacked. But did it also allow for broader alliances, including with parties formed by dissident communists or religious and conservative movements? And who, indeed, were the 'fascists'? This was an acute problem in the case of China, where the CCP viewed the Guomindang as effectively a 'fascist' party, but with which it was urged to ally in an anti-Japanese alliance by the Comintern. Likewise, parties were urged to defend 'bourgeois democracy' as a barrier to 'terrorist dictatorship', but it was not clear whether this might be at the expense of workers' interests and whether it could include participation in government. It remained very much an open question whether the popular front strategy would work and actually improve the position of communist parties.[5]

The consolidation of Stalin in a position of unchallenged dictatorial power at the apex of a 'Stalinized' Soviet Union and Comintern is often seen as the prime mover for many developments in communist affairs at this time.[6] Indeed the term 'Stalinist' is ubiquitously deployed to describe and categorize the mindset, ideology, behaviour, and actions of people, parties, and institutions in the mainstream of organized communism. The idea that Stalin had created a despotic form of personal rule became firmly

established in 1936, particularly among his fiercest opponents in communist circles. It was non-conformist communists, especially those who had lost out in the internecine power struggles within Bolshevism in the 1920s, who first made pejorative use of 'Stalinist' to describe the Soviet system and communist activists loyal to the Comintern. In *The Revolution Betrayed*, completed in August 1936 to counter the claim that socialism had been achieved in Russia, Leon Trotsky presented a picture of the Soviet regime as having 'degenerated' into a 'bureaucratic dictatorship' under the usurper Stalin. Stalin always rejected the idea that Stalinism existed as a political ideology and certainly as a personal dictatorship. The new constitution, which promised direct elections to the Supreme Soviet, albeit only for approved Communist Party candidates, seemed at odds with the centralization of power in one man's hands. But Stalin's domineering presence was now a reality. The consequences of this concentration of authority have been much disputed. Some interpretations of the onset of the Great Terror or of Soviet involvement in Spain, for example, have construed this centralization in very individualistic terms, offering accounts that stress the importance of Stalin's personality and personal influence in directing developments.[7]

Stalin and his inner circle (particularly Molotov, Kaganovich, Ordzhonikidze, Mikoian, Andreev, and Voroshilov) undoubtedly sought to direct policy. While the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party was in theory responsible for policy-making, its meetings had declined sharply as pressure of business had mounted. It was Stalin and his principal lieutenants, meeting in ad hoc groups, who took decisions on the issues at hand. Others were involved as needed, when there were pressing matters that required their particular expertise.[8] In this sense, Stalin was not a lone dictator issuing orders—though he did take decisions by himself on a variety of matters, including making key appointments and initiating policies. Most strikingly, in early 1936 he personally directed Ezhov to investigate alleged links between oppositionists and the death of Kirov, which led directly to the August show trial. And it was he who appointed Ezhov head of the NKVD in September in place of Genrikh Yagoda. It was from this position that Ezhov, encouraged by Stalin, pursued the expanded investigations into internal enemies that led towards the wider terror. Stalin's precise motives for doing this are obscure, though he was evidently convinced that the regime had potentially dangerous internal enemies who needed to be suppressed. Nor is it clear that he was following some preconceived plan of mass arrests and executions. Nevertheless, his personal contributions and approval were of decisive importance.[9] Of course, he relied on the active collaboration of his inner coterie, both for their knowledge and experience and for the implementation of policy, especially in areas in which he was less interested, such as foreign affairs and relations with the Comintern. Each member of the coterie had responsibility for different commissariats in the system of government, vesting in them considerable bureaucratic power and patronage in their own right. Not all meetings and decisions took place with Stalin present. The agonized discussions in September about intervention in Spain occurred while Stalin was taking his extended annual vacation at Sochi on the Black Sea. He corresponded by letter and telegram through Lazar Kaganovich with other key members of the government about Spain, but also on a host of other lesser matters. This

episode revealed Stalin to be remarkably hands-off, particularly over the final decision to commit the Soviet Union to 'Operation X', the covert supply of military aid to the Spanish Republic.[10]

Similar concentration of control existed within the administrative apparatus of the Comintern in Moscow, which by this point functioned almost as a branch of the Soviet government. As general secretary, Dimitrov consulted and corresponded constantly with Stalin and other key members of the Soviet administration, both individually and collectively, forwarding reports that he considered important, suggesting courses of action, seeking advice and approval. During 1936 these discussions focused particularly upon the situations in France, Spain, and China. Dimitrov, for example, acted as interlocutor between the leader of the French Communist Party (PCF) and the Soviet authorities in assessing the position of the party in the summer of 1936, particularly over whether to join Léon Blum's socialist-led government.[11] Likewise, the decision to form the International Brigades in September 1936 was taken in close consultation with Kaganovich, Voroshilov, and Molotov as the Soviet government ministers who, along with Stalin, were primarily responsible for implementing policy towards Spain. Following an internal reorganization approved by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern—incidentally the last to take place—the Executive Committee of the Comintern was effectively sidelined and its sub-bodies abolished. A small circle of secretaries now worked directly with Dimitrov to oversee policy and take responsibility for groups of member parties. Figures such as Palmiro Togliatti, André Marty, and Dmitry Manuilsky were highly influential figures in their own right, playing a major part in the key decisions and everyday operations of Comintern.[12] They were instrumental, along with Dimitrov, in promoting the adoption of the popular front policy at the same Seventh Congress, despite the fact that Stalin was sceptical about it in principle and only lukewarm in his support. Dimitrov also actively cooperated during 1936 in the increasing surveillance by the NKVD of the foreign communists who worked in the Comintern's offices or who were exiled in the Soviet Union. Suspicion fell particularly heavily upon them as a likely source of spies, infiltrated by hostile intelligence services, a view encouraged by the Soviet's own policy of recruiting spies. In early 1936 Dimitrov authorized a commission within the Comintern, headed by the NKVD's representative in the organization, Mikhail Moskvin, to examine the political loyalties of all émigré communists. He also wrote critical reports to Ezhov on particular individuals, such as the veteran revolutionaries Béla Kun and Otto Kuusinen with whom he had previously clashed over matters of policy. In addition to this direct influence over the eventual fate of communist émigrés, Dimitrov also encouraged the member parties of the Comintern to adopt similar methods of surveillance over their own supporters and to exercise 'vigilance' against the threat of infiltration by 'Trotskyists' and spies.[13]

The growing insistence that communists should prove their loyalty was symptomatic of the insecurity of the Soviet and Comintern leaderships, their fear of enemies within and without, but also of their need to gain compliance and obtain consent. The fact that they had themselves come to power through intrigue, and that real rivals for power actually existed, meant that these were not irrational fears. Stalin may well have been

paranoid but there was no doubt that he had real enemies—chief among them Trotsky, who was in exile in Norway throughout 1936. It was these fears that fuelled the wider climate of mutual suspicion in which the turn towards terror took place. Such fears also gave rise to another destructive mechanism, namely, the denunciation by communists of each other, and this served to give the terror something of a life of its own. Finding scapegoats for supposed failures, targeting rivals, proving one's loyalty, and pursuing petty jealousies all came into their own.[14] On 4 December 1936 Ezhov presented a report to the Soviet Central Committee exposing large-scale 'counter-revolutionary' activities within the party bureaucracy and among émigrés. In great part his investigation teams had uncovered the names through informers and from the 'confessions' of suspects. Meanwhile, Dimitrov had had executed some leading figures in his own Bulgarian Communist Party, who had been exiled to the Soviet Union and who just happened to be his long-term rivals for power. Communists outside the border of the Soviet Union, however, were not always so vulnerable and could not always be coerced into compliance. Even in parts of the Soviet Union, such as Ukraine, which only became a full Soviet republic in 1936, and particularly in more remote regions such as Mongolia, ensuring obedience was a difficult issue. And the problem was compounded in the case of communist parties in Latin America, Africa, and Asia that were more distant from the principal centres of organization in Europe. When serious differences over policy arose between Moscow and local communists, as they did in the case of China, it was next to impossible to enforce Soviet or Comintern diktats.

There is little doubt that most convinced communists eagerly identified with the Soviet regime and its leadership. Indeed the public adulation of Stalin as leader of the world communist movement reached new heights in 1936. May Day parades in Paris, Madrid, Prague, Santiago, and Mexico City featured giant portraits of Stalin and reference to him and his pronouncements was universal. Identification with Stalin, sincerely felt by the overwhelming majority of communists, was part of a wider loyalty to the ethos of Bolshevism, although few thought of themselves as blindly obedient 'Stalinists'.[15] Similarly, it was natural that the majority of communist parties—or at least their leaderships—should be predisposed to follow the directions offered by the Comintern. During the summer of 1936, the leadership of the French party actively sought the advice of the Comintern over the correct course of action it should take. Likewise, the leaders of the PCE continually requested guidance during the chaotic early stages of the Spanish Civil War. In the Spanish case it was also telling that there were significant delays in receiving replies, partly due to the difficulties of exchanging communications during a rapidly evolving situation, but also because of prevarication in Moscow.[16] Yet national communist parties could not ignore the cultures and political environments in which they operated, nor could they ignore entirely the concerns of their own members. The inevitable result was that parties sought to marry as far as possible their interpretation of the overall direction of Comintern policy, plus any specific directives, with local pressures and opportunities. To a limited extent, the popular front strategy allowed parties to associate themselves with national symbols and cultures, in order to make themselves appear less alien and threatening. In Spain and China this occurred to an unprecedented

degree in the midst of conflicts in which they explicitly projected themselves as defending national interests against outside forces.[17] Consequently, there were significant variations—sometimes complete contradictions—in the ways in which parties actually acted and in the extent to which they were able and willing to realize Comintern policy.

It was only the legal communist parties that were realistically in a position to create popular front alliances during 1936. Most, however, did not achieve this aim and largely remained on the sidelines of national politics in their respective countries. Attempts to forge links with likely allies, particularly with other working-class parties and trade unions, were more often rebuffed. In particular, where parties were relatively small—such as the USA, Britain, Scandinavia, and Belgium—there was little incentive for labour and socialist parties to contemplate joint action. The legacy of distrust of communist parties proved near insurmountable. Even the Czech Communist Party, one of the largest, had fought the elections of late 1935 alone—albeit with some success in gaining a greater share of the vote and winning thirty seats in parliament. Only in France and Spain (and subsequently in 1937 in Chile) were formal alliances created and these, initially at least, were essentially electoral pacts created in highly polarized political circumstances.[18] In the case of Spain, the Popular Front which successfully contested the February elections was not a creation of the PCE at all, and the party was only included at the very last minute on the personal insistence of the leader of the Left socialists, Largo Caballero. In contrast, the French Communist Party played a far more central role in the creation of the Popular Front which won the May elections. While in France, communists, socialists and middle-class radicals banded together, in Spain, the radicals opposed the Popular Front, which instead included Left republicans, socialists, communists, Catalan republicans, and the dissident Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), the latter despite the objections of the PCE. The outcomes were also different: in France Léon Blum formed a strong socialist-led government, while in Spain the outcome was a weak all-Republican government. But both parties gained in significance, the PCF winning seventy-two seats and the PCE sixteen. Between May and July the PCF added 100,000 new members, reaching some 300,000 in total by the end of the year. Meanwhile the PCE rose from just over 22,000 members in February to over 140,000 by December. However, many of the new recruits were attracted to the two parties because of their involvement in far more radical activities—in particular waves of strikes, factory occupations, and land invasions that were unleashed in the wake of the two elections. Fearful of alienating their own memberships, both parties distanced themselves from government. After consulting the Comintern, Maurice Thorez formally rejected an offer to join the government, while there was never a prospect of such an invitation being offered to the PCE. The Comintern cautioned both parties against their actions being interpreted as a revolutionary threat that could play into the hands of 'fascists'.[19] In France the Blum government was able to weather the storm, while in Spain the ensuing political polarization (to which the PCE in fact made only a minor contribution) created the conditions for civil war. Ironically, it was in these extreme circumstances that the only truly Popular Front government was created in September 1936, when Largo Caballero formed an administration of all those political and trade union groups that

opposed the insurgents. Initially, the PCE actually rejected the offer of participation, keeping to what it perceived to be the Comintern's position, but reversed its decision after consultation with Moscow to take two ministerial posts.[20] Even so, the PCE was continually on the horns of a dilemma which it never completely reconciled: between a commitment to defend the Republic and the pursuit of more revolutionary objectives.

Although success in forming popular fronts was limited, the strategy legitimized other activities and forms of joint action. These were often highly significant, and corresponded to local imperatives that linked communists to wider causes. In some cases, a host of organizations—called 'front organizations' by anti-communists—were linked to communist parties, in other cases communists participated in umbrella groups. Trade unionism was probably the most universal activity undertaken by communists. In most countries the number of communists was too small to build separate union organizations and the policy of the Trade Union International (Profintern) was for communists to work within existing unions. In the case of France this led, in 1936, to the unification of the socialist CGT and communist CGTU union federations. In Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Cuba, as well as other European countries, communists often played a very prominent part in the widespread labour disputes of 1936.[21] Communists were also involved in creating and running unemployed workers' organizations. In Britain, communists played a significant part in the Jarrow March of October to highlight the plight of the unemployed. Actions against racial discrimination were another type of Communist activity. They were also prominent in the Battle of Cable Street in October 1936, when Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists was prevented from holding a march through the Jewish East End of London. In the USA, the Communist Party played an active role in the struggle for civil rights, both independently and within the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. One of the most widespread campaigns in which communists played a prominent part was that in solidarity with the Spanish Republic. It included recruitment for the International Brigades, the provision of medical aid, and political agitation to abandon the non-intervention policy. For the French Communist Party, in particular, these activities consumed a great deal of effort in the second half of 1936, and French communists made up the largest contingent in the Brigades.[22] Even more important was communist involvement in anti-colonial campaigns. For parties in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, anti-colonialism was one of their principal appeals. This was supported by the Comintern's long-standing opposition to imperialism, though this clashed somewhat with the Soviet Union's rather confused policy towards its own ethnic and national groups. For Indian, Vietnamese, and Algerian communists, their activities as part of anti-colonial organizations matched in intensity their commitment to a communist society. Within the French colonies, in particular, there was an upsurge in communist agitation following the amnesty in August.

While the activities of most communist parties were peaceful during 1936, communists also participated in violent struggle on a greater scale than at any time since the October Revolution and the Russian civil war.[23] Parties had been encouraged to develop self-defence organizations to defend themselves against fascist attacks, with low-level street violence not uncommon. The Spanish Communist Party's rather ramshackle

organization, the Workers' and Peasants' Anti-Fascist Militia (MAOC), which engaged in street fighting prior to the outbreak of the civil war, became the basis of its famous 'Fifth Regiment' once the conflict began, and an important component of the Popular Army that was created under Caballero's government. Foreign communists from countries under dictatorial regimes also saw the war in Spain as a chance to strike back against fascism, with Italians, Poles, and Germans prominent in the first groups to arrive. Preparations for armed resistance were also part of many of the anti-colonial campaigns in which communists participated. In 1936 the small Palestine Communist Party participated in the Arab Revolt against British colonial rule.[24] Arguably the most militarized party during 1936 was the CCP, with the Chinese Red Army effectively the backbone of the party. It was also the CCP's military alliances of convenience with local warlords that kept the Guomindang forces at bay after the Long March, and Mao's path to power was to be a military one.[25]

Anti-fascism provided the justification that made the use of violence legitimate as both defensive and as serving a wider humanitarian purpose. The defeat of fascism would constitute the greatest claim to moral superiority that the Soviet Union and communist movements could make in the next decade. But it also had a darker side whereby anyone labelled a 'fascist' could justifiably be attacked as a threat. In China and Spain, communists used preventative violence against 'fascists' and other class enemies. In Spain the PCE and its Catalan counterpart stood for the creation of a strong state in the face of anarchist and POUM calls for a social revolution and they vigorously pursued action against 'fifth columnists', a term invented in the Spanish Civil War, backed by Soviet security personnel sent to advise the Republican government.[26] It was no coincidence that by 1936 dissident communists, such as POUM, were equated with 'fascism', since the August show trials in Moscow saw the defendants accused of being in a conspiracy with foreign fascist regimes.

At the end of 1936 communists were poised on the edge of even greater violence and uncertainty in Spain, China, and within the Soviet Union itself. Used to the idea that they exercised a controlling influence over history, communist leaders and activists found themselves in situations not of their choosing and with difficult choices to make. In terms of the broader policies pursued by the Soviet Union and the Comintern, it was a year predominantly of failure. The attempt to secure collective security was further away than ever. The popular front strategy had largely failed. Distrust and rivalry continued to characterize communist relations with other political parties. Though some communist parties increased in size and influence, the popular front was only one, possibly minor, reason for this. Nevertheless, this did not mean that communist actions had no impact or consequences. In particular, without Soviet intervention it is doubtful whether the Spanish Republic could have survived much beyond the year. Involvement in Spain was ultimately to be a frustrating failure, in which Soviet forces and the Spanish communists would play a highly controversial part, but none of this was evident at the end of 1936. And far from drawing the Soviet Union closer to the Western powers, intervention in Spain would push them further apart, marking a significant step towards the Nazi–Soviet Pact. Unity of organization and purpose were undermined by the inability

to reach common goals and were to be destroyed by the fratricidal tendencies within communism itself. Fragmentation was most evident in the near-independent path taken by the Chinese Communists, but the emergence of a more nationalist form of communism was evident almost everywhere—not least within the Soviet Union itself. The writing was also on the wall for the Comintern, which struggled on until 1943 as a shell organization, ravaged by the impact of the terror and the hostility of Stalin who could see no real useful purpose for it. Perhaps more than at any time since the Bolshevik revolution, nearly twenty years earlier, it was during 1936 that communists found their self-perceptions challenged and considerable doubts raised about the nature and future direction of communism.

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CHAPTER 7

1956

SERGEY RADCHENKO

At 4 a.m. on 6 March 1953, Radio Moscow went on air with the sombre announcement that Stalin was dead. Muscovites poured into the streets, in disbelief, in silence. There was a feeling, wrote Harrison Salisbury, a US journalist in Moscow, that the Russians were 'suffering a deep sense of shock so profound as to paralyze any ordinary display of emotion'. In a country where Stalin had been worshipped like a demi-god, his passing was nothing short of a calamity. The mood was captured by the poet Sergei Mikhalkov: 'If we could only give him/Our beating hearts and our very breath! . . . We say: the Great Stalin is with us! We say: the Great Stalin is alive!'[1]

But Stalin was dead. Residents of East Berlin marched through the Stalin Allee behind a black-bordered portrait of the deceased leader: 'some looked as if they were marching only because they had to, while others walked with the demeanor of ardent Communists'. In Beijing, Mao Zedong proclaimed three days of mourning, lamenting the passing of 'the dearest friend and the great teacher of the Chinese people'. From Pyongyang, the capital of war-torn North Korea, Kim Il Sung promised that his people would 'sacredly guard and carry forward the great banner of Lenin-Stalin'. Five thousand Iranian leftists solemnly gathered at Fawzi Square in Teheran to pay their respects. And in Langley, British Columbia, three schoolboys lowered their school's flag to half-mast to mark the occasion: they were immediately expelled.[2]

Not long after the last eulogies were uttered, the new Soviet leadership began to reorient the country's domestic and foreign policies away from the Stalinist orthodoxy. Changes were perceptible in the economic realm. In August 1953 Prime Minister Georgii Malenkov announced plans to stimulate agricultural output and increase production of consumer goods, long neglected in favour of heavy industry. The Soviet people were promised better products, better services, and better housing. Although Malenkov soon fell from power, a victim of the post-Stalin succession struggle, the First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, embraced his ousted rival's concerns for the welfare of the Soviet consumer, and none too soon. Unrest and rioting in East Germany in June 1953, a result of the Stalinist Walter Ulbricht's unwillingness to ease

production quotas, had taught Moscow that there was a limit to how far belts could be tightened.[3]

In an effort to remedy the most grotesque excesses of the Stalin era, the new Soviet leadership sought to reverse the tide of repression. Stalin's henchman Lavrentii Beria, who had sent thousands to their deaths as the head of the secret police, now spearheaded efforts to 'liquidate the system of forced labor'. Rehabilitations began in 1953, and by February 1956 at least seven thousand people had had their verdicts overturned. On 27 March 1953 the Supreme Soviet announced an amnesty for many categories of Gulag inmates. Beria did not see these reforms through to the end: another casualty in the relentless power struggle, he was arrested and, in December 1953, secretly executed. But his was one of the last deaths on the altar of Stalinism; henceforth, Soviet power struggles would not be so deadly. The new leadership moved to limit the powers of the secret police, placing them under party control. The authorities also untightened the grip—if only slightly—on the public expression of dissenting views among Soviet intellectuals, artists, and writers. This was a refreshing change. After the cold winds of repression, these were the years of the Thaw—so-called after a 1954 novel by Ilya Ehrenburg, which allegorically criticized the Stalin era.[4]

There was also a thaw in Soviet foreign policy. Malenkov, and later Khrushchev, embraced ideas of peaceful coexistence between the East and the West. This policy was born of a realization that a nuclear war would have no winners, and that the two blocs had no choice but to settle their differences at the negotiating table, and compete peacefully. The new Soviet priorities translated this into an effort to end the wars in Korea and Indochina in 1953–4. In 1955 the Soviet Union agreed to a neutrality treaty with Austria, withdrawing its occupation force. Moscow launched a wide appeal to win sympathy from the Third World, courting Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, India's Jawaharlal Nehru, and Indonesia's Sukarno—even though that often required a toning down of communist rhetoric. Within the socialist bloc, the Soviets emphasized greater equality at the expense of the strict hierarchy of the Stalin days. In 1954 Khrushchev, in a bid to win Chinese support, cancelled humiliating agreements that had given the Soviet Union special privileges in Manchuria and Xinjiang, and withdrew forces from Port Arthur, the Soviet naval base in China. He also mended fences with the Yugoslav leader Iosip Broz Tito, whom Stalin had excommunicated from the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), Moscow's framework for imposing uniformity on Eastern Europe. Cominform itself was abolished in 1956. The Soviets were still keen to remain in control in Eastern Europe but in less obvious and less brutal ways than in Stalin's time.

The Secret Report

On 25 February 1956, the final day of the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, Congress delegates were called in for a closed session (foreign visitors were excluded). Khrushchev spoke for nearly four hours to the stunned assembly to the effect

that Stalin had been personally responsible for the bloodbath of repressions; that he had failed to recognize the danger of the German invasion in 1941 and committed criminal blunders throughout the war; that he had sent entire nations into exile; that he had ruined Soviet agriculture; and that he had consciously built up his own personality cult. There was a 'deathly silence' in the hall. Many of the things Khrushchev had said were well known to those present, but the scale and the gravity of the condemnation were difficult to stomach. There was no transcript of the proceedings but in the following weeks an edited copy of Khrushchev's speech was read out to party members and the non-party *aktiv* (activists) around the country. This meant, in practice, millions of people. Some of the more important foreign delegations also received a transcript of what would come to be called the 'Secret Report'.[5]

Khrushchev's denunciation of the country's chief idol had a shell-shock effect on the population, opening the floodgates to expressions of anger, hatred, disappointment, and hope. Many people simply refused to believe Khrushchev. 'Why was he [Khrushchev] silent then, and now, when Stalin is dead, has he begun to pour dirt all over him?', wondered one retired colonel after reading Khrushchev's report. 'For some reason I don't really believe in all the facts recounted in the secret letter. Stalin did a lot for the Soviet state, and his achievements cannot be understated.'[6] Some people even took their frustrations and grievances overseas, like one secondary-school teacher, Anatolii Danilevskii, who wrote to Mao Zedong alleging unfair criticism of Stalin by 'different upstarts and wheeler-dealers' with their 'ideology of timeserving and careerism, bias and false testimony, hypocrisy and betrayal'.[7] But things got much worse than anonymous letters by disgruntled Stalinists. Shortly after the news of the 'Secret Report' leaked out to the public, the Soviet Republic of Georgia witnessed unrest and rioting on 4 March as the youths and students took to the streets of Tbilisi, the republican capital, to commemorate the third anniversary of Stalin's death. Chanting 'Dideba did Stalins!', 'Dideba belads Stalins!' ('Long Live Great Stalin!' 'Long Live Our Leader Stalin!'), the students converged on the central square. The party authorities cracked down on the demonstrators on 9 March, leaving scores dead. The square had to be cleared with tanks.[8]

But even if Stalin remained popular in many quarters, not least in the military and among the ranks of the party conservatives, he was also widely denounced. The fallen demi-god was vilified at party meetings and in the street, often by the same people who had earlier worshipped him. Not all went to the length of engineer L. A. Zolotov, who axed the head off a Stalin statue in the front yard of his factory in the city of Cheboksary, or the hammer-wielding hooligans in Brest who attacked a bust of Stalin installed in the city library. But portraits of Stalin were coming down in public places and in private apartments. Stalin's works—only recently the must-haves of any library and bookstore—were disappearing from the shelves. And the Central Committee received repeated requests from a disenchanted public to take Stalin out of the Mausoleum where his mummified remains still lay next to Lenin's. 'He should be taken somewhere and dumped outside the Soviet borders' was one imaginative proposal that was a bit too radical for Khrushchev—who in the end did authorize Stalin's quiet removal, cremation, and reburial in the Kremlin wall.[9]

De-Stalinization was especially welcomed by artists and the writers, people for whom Stalin's breathtaking fall heralded the liberation of creativity, a spiritual rebirth. Among those who rode the crest of rediscovered freedoms were poets and writers like Evgenii Evtushenko, Vasilii Fedorov, and Vladimir Dudintsev. Evtushenko wrote about the 'untruth' that had replaced the 'big truth' with 'shameful imitation', while Fedorov in one poem lamented the 'slave inside me'. The party watchdogs read between the lines of these poems, seeing criticism of the regime. This was also what they read in Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone*, a 1956 novel about the uphill battle of a talented inventor against stifling Soviet bureaucracy. And it was not just the party watchdogs who read between the lines. Discussing Dudintsev's novel, the writer Konstantin Paustovskii spelled out the big implications: 'In our country, there exists with impunity and even prospers a completely new class, a new caste of people. This is a new tribe of predators and owners, who have nothing in common with the revolution, with our regime, or with socialism. These are cynics and obscurantists. . . . These are middlemen and stranglers of talent . . .'. Just a few years earlier comments like these would have led Paustovskii straight to the firing squad. But Khrushchev's report pushed the boundaries of the permissible. For a few brief months it was not clear where those boundaries actually lay.[10]

It did not take long for Khrushchev to realize that de-Stalinization could go badly wrong. What he meant to do was to dethrone Stalin, not to question the fundamentals of socialism in the USSR. But as discussion of the 'Secret Report' unfolded across the country, many began asking uncomfortable, even dangerous questions about the very nature of the Soviet system. It was not uncommon to hear comments that projected Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin onto the local party secretaries—'little Stalins'—who were accused of living lives of privilege even as the common folk faced daily hardships. 'The people live without tea, sugar and sometimes without bread,' wrote one resident of the city of Sverdlovsk, a major Soviet industrial centre, 'there is no meat, no fish, or other products. . . . Everything is handed overseas for nothing, as they [the party leaders] hope to entice people to come to their side: allegedly, we have it good, the capitalists are worse off . . .'. The Sverdlovsk letter ended with a solemn verdict: 'We have no freedom, and there is no prosperity for the people.'[11] The case that attracted most attention from the party authorities was the heated political discussion at a meeting of the party cell of the Thermal Technical Laboratory of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, on 23 and 26 March 1956. The meeting took an unprecedented turn when several participants condemned the party leadership—in the words of one of the speakers, Iurii Orlov, 'a heap of scoundrels'—and the party itself, with its 'spirit of slavery'. Similar ideas could be heard far and wide, in meetings across the country. They were duly noted and reported to the Kremlin: calls for free elections and freedom of speech, for strengthening democratic institutions in the Soviet Union.[12]

Such challenges to the Soviet system could not go unanswered. Orlov, for instance, was stripped of his party membership, and fired from the Laboratory. He recalled a conversation with the Italian physicist Bruno Pontecorvo: 'We demanded to join socialism with democracy,' Orlov said. 'But,' protested Pontecorvo (who had defected to the USSR in 1950), 'one cannot have bourgeois liberties under socialism'. At the time,

Pontecorvo's idea struck Orlov as 'absurd'.[13] But the physicist was right on target. Those who expected that the denunciation of Stalin would lead to democratic socialism misread Khrushchev's intentions. By the summer of 1956 one could sense a roll-back of de-Stalinization, a tendency that became even more pronounced towards the end of the year, when continued unrest in the socialist camp threw Khrushchev on the defensive. 'There is no longer a thaw,' Khrushchev would say later, addressing himself to the 'rotten liberals' of the post-Stalin era, 'not even a chill but a frost. There will be the fiercest frost for people like you . . .'.[14]

Poland and Hungary

Like residents of Sverdlovsk, workers in the Polish city of Poznań grew increasingly frustrated with their dismally low living standards. In the relatively more open atmosphere of the spring of 1956, when the people of Poland, much like their neighbours in the East, reflected on the disclosures of Khrushchev's 'Secret Report', it became easier to speak up about the wrongdoings of the past and the miseries of the present. Poznań, like the rest of Poland, was restless with pent-up anger and anticipation of change. Tensions boiled over when on 28 June employees at the Stalin Metal Works and at enterprises across Poznań stopped work and marched through the streets, demanding better pay and lower production quotas. Political demands were also advanced alongside calls for better living conditions. It was not just 'We want bread!' but 'We want freedom!', not only a question of 'Down with the exploitation of the workers!' but also that of 'Down with Bolshevism!' What began like a peaceful demonstration soon became a full-fledged uprising. The local party and government authorities were briefly paralyzed. The protesters captured the headquarters of the Provincial Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP, Poland's ruling Communist Party), and besieged the Public Security Office. The uprising was violently put down with the help of the Armed Forces and the Internal Security Corps, commanded by Soviet generals. At least seventy-three people were killed, mainly the protesters.[15]

Poznań exposed the shallow roots of Poland's communism. There was not much to show for more than ten years of progressive communization and sovietization, for all the repression of public enemies, for all the propaganda of friendship with the USSR and common interests of the socialist bloc. No sooner did the ruling regime relax controls than it found itself under siege by the people, many of whom may have not known what it was exactly that they wanted but did know what they did not want: the Soviet connection. Opposition to communism fed into the traditional anti-Russian sentiments of the Polish public. Poznań articulated this longing for independence from Moscow, highlighting at the same time the continued appeal of the West, as many Westerners (who were in town for the Poznań International Fair) found out first hand, when they were welcomed and cheered by the demonstrators. The Russians, by contrast, were accused of looting the Polish economy—taking all that was valuable (in particular, coal) and

paying next to nothing for it. One could also hear calls to return the Polish lands that the Russians had taken in 1939 by a secret agreement with Germany and had kept after the war.

But if Poznań showed that the Poles had no great love for either the Reds or the Russians, subsequent developments made it clear that, given the choice between the two, the people preferred communism over dependence on the USSR. Indeed, communism was tolerable if it was rid of its ugliest Stalinist facets, and if it was sufficiently 'national' in orientation. The Polish case was unique in that at this crucial point in time the PUWP experienced a vacuum of leadership, occasioned by the death of Poland's 'little Stalin', Bolesław Bierut, who had succumbed to a heart attack in Moscow shortly after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. Factional struggle inside the ruling elites allowed for the unexpected reemergence of Władisław Gomułka, a one-time leader of the Polish communists who fell out of Stalin's favour in 1948 for advocating a Polish road to socialism at a time when such ideas were a dangerous heresy. Gomułka subsequently languished in gaol (a humane treatment by the standard of the day) until he was quietly let out in February 1955. Growing unrest then propelled Gomułka to the forefront of national politics. Although a communist, he had strong nationalist credentials, and for this reason he was genuinely popular among the Polish people as a leader who would resist Soviet encroachment on Poland's sovereignty. Within the PUWP leadership, Gomułka's conservative opponents were outnumbered by his supporters who saw his return as the one opportunity to reverse the party's plummeting fortunes. On 21 October 1956 Gomułka was put back in charge as the party's First Secretary.

Two days before that, on 19 October, a Soviet delegation led by Khrushchev himself turned up, uninvited, in the Polish capital of Warsaw. For some months now the Soviets had been receiving worrisome reports from their embassy in Poland, and from their allies in the ranks of the Polish leadership, about the deepening crisis of the ruling regime.[16] Khrushchev had been angered by Gomułka's unexpected rise in spite of Moscow's disapproval of his politics, and also worried about the fate of staunch Soviet supporters within the ruling elite, especially of Konstantin Rokossowski, the Soviet-installed Minister of Defence and a Soviet national, who was about to lose his job. Khrushchev's eleventh-hour appearance aimed to prevent a major political reshuffle, which would clearly have weakened the Soviet ability to exercise control over Poland and its overall position in Eastern Europe. Khrushchev got off the plane in Warsaw showing his fist, threatening Gomułka that 'you will not pull this one off'.[17]

Even as Khrushchev opened the talks with the Poles, Soviet forces in northern and western Poland were being redeployed menacingly towards Warsaw in what the Soviets claimed was a routine exercise. It was not difficult for Gomułka to imagine the consequences of such an exercise. Yet he held his ground in the face of Khrushchev's threats, reassuring him that Poland would remain steadfast on the road to socialism, and would not leave the Soviet bloc.[18] Khrushchev was somewhat calmed by such promises. He recalled some years later: 'I believed him, telling my comrades: "I think we have no reasons not to believe Gomułka." '[19] The movement of troops towards Warsaw was halted, but the situation hung in a precarious balance. On 20 October, at the first meeting of the

Soviet Presidium following his return from Poland, Khrushchev appeared to be leaning towards military intervention.[20] What really saved Gomułka was the anti-Soviet and anti-communist uprising in Hungary, which made the Poles look loyal by comparison.

In June 1953, just three months after Stalin's death, Moscow appointed a new prime minister for Hungary, Imre Nagy. A one-time informer for the Soviet secret police, Nagy had spent many years in Moscow before coming back to Budapest after the war to take charge of agricultural questions in the new government. His agricultural expertise, as well as the Soviet connection, served him well in 1953 when the new Soviet leaders decided to curb the excessive powers of Hungary's 'little Stalin', Mátyás Rákosi, who had presided over years of bloody repression and a brutal collectivization campaign. Nagy was charged with steering the 'New Course' for Hungary: a retrenchment of collectivization and encouragement of consumption in the economic sphere, and reduction of the repressive powers of the police state. Rákosi, who had stayed on as the Party Secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP)—a distinct sign of the Kremlin's ambiguity about Nagy's program—worked hard to undermine the New Course, and his rival too. The demise of Nagy's key supporters in Moscow—Beria and Malenkov—made the task easier: by April 1955 the reformist prime minister was out, replaced by András Hegedüs who deferred to the unreformed Stalinist Rákosi.[21]

The end of Hungary's New Course and Nagy's downfall exacerbated popular dissatisfaction with the ruling regime. As in the USSR, discontent was especially widespread in intellectual circles and among the youth. Rákosi was at his wits' end about the growing dissent, asking at one point in October 1955 that two prominent Soviet writers meet with their Hungarian colleagues in order to 'influence' them towards greater support of the regime, one of them being, ironically, Ilya Ehrenburg, the prophet of the Soviet thaw. These Soviet writers and Hungarian intellectuals, in fact, had a lot in common, for the ideas of the thaw had wide appeal across the socialist commonwealth, and unlike the Western broadcasts, could not be jammed or dismissed as enemy propaganda.[22] As Rákosi, disoriented by the Secret Report, stalled and hesitated at the helm of a divided party, voices of dissent grew louder, amplified in the heated discussions of the Petöfi Circle, a discussion club for the intellectuals and youth sponsored in late 1955 by the regime itself, in an effort to channel growing dissent away from anti-communism. Unfortunately for Rákosi, discussions of the Petöfi Circle increasingly attracted people from all walks of life. Budapest's factories sent workers' delegations, so the ideas of dissent were propagated far and wide. Many participants of the Petöfi Circle put their faith in Imre Nagy who, though out of power, commanded considerable influence among burgeoning ranks of supporters. Many, like Nagy himself, remained committed to the idea of a socialist future in Hungary. But this commitment was tested and eroded by the open-ended calls for freedom. 'Two half-truths do not make one full truth,' thundered the writer Tibor Meray to the six thousand people who assembled for the Petöfi Circle discussion on 27 June 1956: 'Only the full truth will satisfy us. But you can have truth only where there is freedom. And therefore, first and foremost, we demand freedom!'[23]

That tumultuous session of the Petöfi Circle—the most heated to date—ended at 4 a.m. on 28 June, just two hours before workers took to the streets in Poznań. Using

the Polish events as his excuse, Rákosi shut down the Circle. But he was ruling on borrowed time. The Soviets blamed 'that idiot' Rákosi for the build-up of discontent in Hungary, forcing him to resign in July.[24] Yet the appointment of Ernő Gerő, one of Rákosi's associates, as the First Secretary was not enough to appease the opposition. Tensions continued to mount and on 23 October 1956 students and workers poured into the streets: Hungary was in a state of a revolution. The protesters called for sweeping reforms: introduction of elections, equality in the economic relationship with the USSR (the Hungarians wanted to sell their uranium at world market prices), the public trial of Rákosi and his henchmen, the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Hungary and, symbolically, the removal of the Stalin statue in central Budapest.[25] That last demand proved the easiest to realize: that night a crowd toppled the statue in the City Park. It was dragged through the streets and smashed to pieces. Seeing control slipping from their hands, the HWP Political Committee called upon Nagy to rejoin the leadership as prime minister. Yet this belated gesture, which might have sufficed in July, fell far short of the demands now put forward by the radicalized protesters.

As events unfolded, the Soviet leadership discussed their options. Khrushchev's first reaction was to order Soviet forces to Budapest to help disperse the protesters. By dawn on 24 October, Soviet tanks had occupied parts of the Hungarian capital, but they did not have sufficient force to establish effective control. An uneasy stalemate ensued while the Soviet envoys Anastas Mikoyan and Mikhail Suslov met with the Hungarian leaders in an effort to resolve the crisis. Lending support to Nagy's government, they cautioned Moscow against military intervention. The matter was discussed at length at the Presidium and on 30 October Khrushchev actually decided to resolve the crisis peacefully. On the same day, prompted by the Chinese, he agreed to publish a declaration emphasizing the sovereign equality of all socialist states, and even promising to begin negotiations on withdrawing Soviet troops from Hungary.[26] This was a huge, hitherto unthinkable Soviet concession, which showed how far Moscow had moved from Stalinist methods of running the Eastern bloc. Unfortunately for the Hungarians, Khrushchev changed his mind on 31 October. From the Soviet perspective, the situation in Budapest had gone from bad to worse, Nagy having announced the previous day that Hungary would see the restoration of a multi-party system. The very future of Hungary's socialism seemed in question. Khrushchev was taken aback by reports of communists in Budapest (often members of the despised State Security, the ÁVH) being hanged on lamp posts. The Soviet leader knew he had China's backing to intervene. Khrushchev was also aware that the British, French, and Israelis had commenced an attack on Egypt on 29 October, precipitating the Suez Crisis. The brief war, which was a response to Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, split the West, with the US adamantly opposed to what President Dwight D. Eisenhower perceived as outright imperialism on the part of the British and the French that would likely send Nasser fleeing into the Soviet embrace. The war in the Middle East lowered the stakes of intervention in Hungary, by providing a suitable distraction. Khrushchev feared that unless the Soviet Union intervened, Hungary, like Egypt, could fall prey to the 'offensive' of the West. 'Our party will not understand us,' Khrushchev summed up—'we have no other choice'.[27]

On 31 October the Soviet leader authorized a massive military intervention in Hungary. By 4 November, Soviet forces were in Budapest. A few days and several thousand deaths later, the Hungarian revolution was finally strangled. Nagy fled to the Yugoslav Embassy (he was ultimately handed over to the Hungarians, tried, and executed). János Kádár, a reformist communist and a member of Nagy's government before he defected to the Soviets, was enthroned as the new ruler of Hungary. He promised the Hungarians a milder form of communism, and implemented gradual reforms, which helped to keep the regime afloat for more than thirty years. The Hungarian revolution of 1956 thus ended in failure. But in the longer term it exposed the moral bankruptcy of communism. For if the communist system could be sustained only with assistance of Soviet tanks, the system had no future.

Poland and Hungary turned out very differently in 1956, but there was considerable similarity in the internal dynamics of the two crises, especially in that both were animated as much by anti-Russian sentiment as by anti-communism. The two conveniently overlapped, so that being anti-communist often meant being anti-Russian as well, though Gomułka argued otherwise. In Poland and Hungary a key theme was the Soviet domination of the two satellites—in particular, Soviet economic exploitation. The Poles protested Moscow's failure to pay adequately for coal purchases, and the Hungarians resented having to sell uranium on the cheap. Although neither Poland nor Hungary were in the same league as many Third World countries, in this respect their plight resonated with many an anti-colonial liberation movement.

The Rise of China

The year 1956 ushered in the beginning of 'de-colonization' of the Eastern bloc, although the patterns of struggle were different for the different 'colonies'. The dictator of desperately poor Albania, Enver Hoxha, managed to check challenges by his domestic opponents who sought to use Khrushchev's Secret Report to undermine him, and he subsequently broke free from Soviet control by turning to China. In North Korea developments were similar in that opponents of the tyrant Kim Il Sung tried to oust him in August 1956, only for the plot to backfire. Kim purged his opponents, even though Moscow and Beijing attempted to intervene on their behalf. After 1956, Kim distanced himself from both these allies and, under the ideological banner of *Juche* (self-reliance) steered a politically astute course, balancing China against the Soviet Union, while obtaining aid from both. This allowed him to establish a degree of political autonomy that, many years later, would make North Korea relatively immune from communist collapse.[28]

But it was China that was the greatest beneficiary of the 'de-colonization' of 1956, for it was Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin that allowed Mao Zedong to set a course in domestic and foreign policy that would soon lead to the end of the Sino-Soviet alliance and prepare China for the era of reform and opening to the outside world. Mao spent the

two months between mid-February and mid-April 1956 studying reports of various sectors of the Chinese economy. His main concern was how to hasten China's development in order—as he put it—'to change the country's backward economic, scientific, and cultural status, and quickly reach the advanced level in the world'.[29] Up to then China had relied on the Soviet Union for advice: thousands of Soviet experts were working in China, helping implement the country's First Five-Year Plan, which relied on extensive investment in the heavy industry in accordance with the Stalinist model of industrialization. The Soviets were already dissatisfied with this model and were in the process of moving towards more consumer-friendly policies. Mao, too, was unhappy but this was because he thought the Soviet-advised development targets were too cautious. He wanted China to develop faster than the USSR, calling on his colleagues to abandon 'superstitions', whether these were Chinese or foreign. By the time Khrushchev exposed Stalin's cult, Mao had already decided to defer less to the Soviets on economic questions, a decision that would lead China towards the economic radicalism of the utopian Great Leap Forward, a disaster that would cost millions of lives.

On the one hand, Khrushchev's Secret Report made it easier for the Chinese to question Moscow's authority; on the other hand, it created conditions for Mao to assert moral leadership in the socialist camp, as well as the international communist movement. After he had had a chance to read through the Secret Report, Mao announced that Khrushchev had done two things,: he had 'removed the lid' and also 'made a mess'. By 'removing the lid', Mao meant that the Soviet leader, in showing that even Stalin had made mistakes, had opened the way to each party to act in accordance with its own circumstances. Khrushchev, Mao explained, had broken the 'incantation of the golden hoop', the hoop worn by the Monkey King of the Chinese literary classic *Journey to the West*. The monk Tang Sanzang had sought to control the Monkey King through a magic hoop around his head that caused him excruciating pain. Mao Zedong, who admired—and identified with—the Monkey King, was no doubt content to be freed from the Stalinist hoop.[30] 'Making a mess' referred to Mao's (justified) conclusion that Khrushchev's 'Secret Report' confused and weakened the international communist movement. Events in Poland and Hungary would prove Mao's foresight in this respect.

Yet there was also a good thing in Khrushchev's 'mess', for it allowed Mao to claim the role of arbiter of the communist world, the wise man who could sort out the problems Khrushchev had caused. Mao's position was articulated in an editorial published by the daily newspaper, *Renmin Ribao*, on 5 April 1956, 'On the Historical Experiences of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat'. The main theme of the article was that mistakes were inevitable in the process of socialist construction, so it was natural that Stalin would have made mistakes. 'We should view Stalin from an historical standpoint' went the article (which was written with Mao's extensive input)—'make a proper and all-round analysis to see where he was right and where he was wrong, and draw useful lessons'.[31] Mao had by then decided that the ratio of Stalin's virtues to his mistakes was 70 to 30, or, as he liked to put it figuratively, of Stalin's ten fingers only three were rotten.[32] As for the lessons to be drawn, the theme of selective learning from Soviet mistakes was present throughout. Mao put the matter much more bluntly at the Chinese Communist Party

(CCP) Secretariat meeting the day before, when he listed 'independence' as the first 'lesson' to be drawn from Khrushchev's de-Stalinization.[33]

After the article was published, the Chinese Foreign Ministry instructed PRC embassies throughout the world to collect comments. The feedback was very flattering, with the Chinese Embassy in Moscow especially highlighting the 'deep impression' the article had in the USSR. A report sent, among others, to Mao, pointed out that 'not a few Soviet comrades believe that this article's significance goes beyond China's sphere, and has great educational significance for Soviet party members and the Soviet people, and also for the fraternal parties and for the people of the world…'.[34] Mao now towered above Khrushchev as the philosopher of the revolution, a true heir to the legacy of Marxism-Leninism. Only a few years earlier, he had gone out of his way to emphasize that he was Stalin's loyal pupil, not like the Yugoslavs, who had broken free from Moscow's control. Now in 1956 he told the Yugoslavs: 'Liberty, equality and fraternity are slogans of the bourgeoisie, but now we have to fight for them.… Now there is, in a sense, an atmosphere of anti-feudalism, in which a father-and-son relationship is giving way to a brotherly relationship, and a patriarchal system toppled.'[35] But who was the elder and who was the younger brother in the communist family was not spelled out. And for Mao, there was no straightforward answer. He well realized that China was behind the USSR, yet he was intent on catching up and overtaking it in the shortest possible time.

In the meantime, Mao used the newly found equality of the Eastern bloc to build up China's reputation in Eastern Europe, violating the division of responsibilities that he and Stalin had agreed in 1949–50, wherein Beijing had responsibility for East Asian not European matters. The Chinese were deeply involved in both the Polish and the Hungarian crises: Mao's second-in-command, Liu Shaoqi, led a delegation to Moscow in October to advise Khrushchev on how to save the situation. At first, he advised the Soviets against intervention in either country, describing the Soviet tendency to 'impose [their] will' on other communist countries as a 'big-power chauvinist tendency'. Later, though, the Chinese backed the Soviet invasion of Hungary, no doubt because Mao realized that the situation in Budapest was heading towards the collapse of socialism. The Chinese leadership later ascribed Soviet restraint in Poland and the intervention in Hungary to China's well-timed advice, and whatever its real impact, it certainly boosted Mao's self-confidence as the arbiter of relations in the socialist camp.[36]

One of the lessons Mao claimed to learn from Hungary was that when a ruling party becomes separated from the 'masses', when it succumbs to 'subjectivism', 'factionalism', and 'bureaucratism', it loses the ability to lead. Rákosi, Mao said, had done 'ridiculous things' in Hungary, and even Stalin in the USSR did not 'listen carefully to the opinions of his comrades and the voice of the masses'.[37] This was something the Chairman sought to avoid in China by allowing a measure of healthy debate. The new policy of letting 'one hundred flowers bloom, one hundred schools of thought contend' took shape gradually from late spring 1956, in the face of resistance by party cadres at every level, who did not like the idea of being criticized. Mao, however, was confident of his ability to withstand criticism—indeed, to strengthen his own authority by appealing to the masses, and the intellectuals, at the expense of his own party—and so avoid the Hungarian scenario.

By May 1957 the 'Hundred Flowers' campaign was in full bloom, but Mao was unsettled by the criticism. He had never intended for anyone to question the fundamentals of the socialist system in China, or the right of the CCP to rule. Now labelling critical commentaries as 'poisonous weeds', he unleashed a campaign to suppress 'rightist' intellectuals and party officials (the label was applied broadly to about half a million people). The party's critics were silenced, and many were purged or sent to the countryside for 're-education'. As Mao explained to Hungary's János Kádár, 'like the Hungarian events of October, [in China] almost every state institution, office, school, and so on, has produced its own "little" Imre Nagy. For a period of about two weeks, it was only the Rightists who spoke up, and during these two weeks, in many places, the antecedents to the Hungarian October were played out in miniature.'[38] By the summer of 1957 the Maoist experiment in democracy was over. The one lesson that the CCP leadership had learned was to make sure that no such thing would ever happen again; henceforth, the authorities would meet any calls for political liberalization with decisive and sometimes bloody repression.

Conclusion

The year 1956 changed the course of world history, but its most profound consequences did not become manifest until many years later. At the time, de-Stalinization felt like a fresh breeze in Moscow's sails: the Communist Party, rid of the worst excesses of Stalinism, was to press ahead with the socialist experiment with ever greater wisdom and justice, and with firmer support from the Soviet people. There was already a roll-back by mid-1956, as the Soviet leadership sought to cope with popular unrest and to stem anti-communism in Eastern Europe. But Khrushchev persevered into the late 1950s and early 1960s, not only because he was morally committed to de-Stalinization, as a *sine qua non* of building socialism in the USSR, but also because his political fortunes in part depended on his continued opposition to Stalin's defenders in the Soviet leadership. These included the heavyweight Viacheslav Molotov, whom Khrushchev—just—managed to purge in 1957. De-Stalinization also became an important card for Khrushchev to play against his Chinese opponents in the early 1960s, when two opposing views on Stalin became part and parcel of the ideological struggle that characterized the Sino-Soviet split.

However, Khrushchev was never a consistent de-Stalinizer. He criticized Stalin but he defended the system that had brought Stalin to the helm. Yet the idea that Stalin was an aberration and that, but for Stalin, the Soviet system was superior to any other system, stretched credibility, as Khrushchev learned quickly enough. People such as Iurii Orlov and other dissidents-in-the-making wanted to proceed towards openness and greater democratization, but this the Soviet leader could not allow. In 1964, however, Khrushchev was ousted from power. His successors were even less committed to de-Stalinization than he had been. In the years that followed, Stalin was partially

rehabilitated, and the voices of dissent were silenced. Those who publicly disagreed with the Soviet government soon found themselves in prison, in the insane asylum, or in exile in the West. Many others kept quiet. Some of these silenced intellectuals, the children of the thaw, moved up through the system and played an important role in encouraging openness and political pluralism in the USSR in the late 1980s when Mikhail Gorbachev, himself a child of the thaw, claimed the reins of power.

Gorbachev returned to Khrushchev's abandoned project of de-Stalinization. He ordered the publication of the 'Secret Report' with its account of Stalin's crimes. State censorship of the media was partially lifted and, by the late 1980s, there was a lively debate in Soviet society about the merits and demerits of communism. As in 1956, there was no unanimity, with liberals and conservatives fighting it out on the pages of newspapers and in the corridors of power, in the hope of gaining the support of the Soviet people and of Gorbachev himself. Gorbachev sided with the liberals and within a few years communism was no more. However, this did not close the fissures that had cut through Soviet society since 1956. Stalinism and anti-Stalinism still contend for the allegiance of the Russian public. In recent years Russia has seen a reversal of democracy and, unsurprisingly, a rise in Stalin's reputation, attested by dozens of hagiographic histories of the Stalin era that now fill Russia's bookstores. Thus, the de-Stalinization begun by Khrushchev in 1956 is still incomplete.

The year 1956 marked a turning point for Eastern Europe. On the one hand, bloody suppression of the Hungarian uprising confirmed the apparent inviolability of Moscow's control. Washington pointedly abstained from helping out the anti-communist forces in Budapest, except by proclamations of moral solidarity, which probably did more harm than good by undermining the prospects for a compromise solution à la Gomułka and encouraging a degree of radicalism that the Soviets simply could not tolerate. But the Soviet crackdown only served to demonstrate that Hungarian communism was an imposition from the outside, that its very survival depended on Moscow's willingness to use force. When in 1989 Gorbachev refused to do that, the communist regimes in Eastern Europe toppled one after another. But the legacies of 1956 remain, as Russia and Europe still eye each other suspiciously across the former Cold War battlefields strewn with unpleasant memories of brutal Stalinization and still more brutal de-Stalinization.

Another legacy of 1956 was China's break with the USSR. De-Stalinization cleared the playing field for Mao, making it possible to ignore Soviet advice in a way that the hierarchical structure of Sino-Soviet relations would never have permitted under Stalin. Dispensing with 'superstitions', Mao plunged the country into the Great Leap Forward and, when that experiment in economic radicalism ended in tragedy, blamed the party cadres for their lack of faith. In 1966 Mao summoned the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses in support of his utopian visions, and the whole country descended into chaos under the banner of the Cultural Revolution. There is a clear thread that connects 1956 with Maoist radicalism and ultimately with Deng Xiaoping's policy of reform and opening, namely, China's search for its own path towards modernity. But the continued unwillingness on the part of the Chinese leadership to ease censorship or to move

towards political liberalization suggests that Beijing learned the hard lessons, first of 1956, and later of 1989. Whether and when these lessons are unlearned will determine the fate of China and, therefore, of the world.

Notes

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6. Karl Aimermakher et al. (eds.), *Doklad N.S. Khrushcheva o Kul'te Lichnosti Stalina na XX s"ezde KPSS: Dokumenty* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2002), 542.
7. Letter from Anatolii Danilevskii to Mao Zedong, 12 August 1957. Chinese Foreign Ministry Archive: 109–01098–03, 19.
8. Aimermakher et al. (eds.), *Doklad N.S. Khrushcheva*, 257–64.
9. Aimermakher et al. (eds.), *Doklad N.S. Khrushcheva*, 502, 544, 594–5.
10. On Paustovskii's comment, see Vitalii Iu. Afiani et al. (eds.), *Apparat TsK KPSS i Kul'tura, 1953–1957: Dokumenty* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001), 572. On Evtushenko and Fedorov, see Vitalii Iu. Afi ani et al. (eds.), *Apparat TsK KPSS i Kul'tura, 1953–1957: Dokumenty* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001), 537–8.
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13. Iurii Orlov, *Opasnye Mysli: Memuary iz Russkoi Zhizni* (Moscow: Moskovskaia Khel'sinskaia Gruppa, 2006), 117.
14. *Ogonëk*, no. 8 (February 2008).
15. One of the best treatments is Paweł Machcewicz and Maya Latynski, *Rebellious Satellite: Poland 1956* (Washington, DC, and Stanford, CA: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 2009).
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CHAPTER 8

1968

MAUD ANNE BRACKE

The 'Spirit of 1968': Cultural Revolt

On 24 August 1968, following news of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Fidel Castro appeared before the Cuban population to defend Moscow's action. The invasion, he claimed, had been necessary, as 'Czechoslovakia [was] moving toward a counter-revolutionary situation, toward capitalism and into the arms of imperialism', although he also acknowledged that 'frankly, [the invasion] has no legality'.[1] Two months later, in October, mass youth demonstrations in Mexico City resulted in the largest massacre by state authorities in 1968: over 300 protesters were killed, over 2,000 wounded, and again around 2000 imprisoned.[2] A protest movement that had started with a march in support of the Cuban Revolution, and had repeatedly sought Castro's endorsement, was violently crushed with no sign of solidarity whatsoever from the Cuban leader. Castro's responses to these globally resonating events illustrate the dilemmas facing communist parties and movements in the face of the student and worker protests of 1968. On the one hand, the Cuban Revolution, which had gradually been drawn into the 'world communist movement', appeared to symbolize the continuing ability of the latter to mobilize revolutionary impulses, especially in the Third World. On the other, communist regimes in 1968 were challenged by radical movements inspired by the discourses, imagery, and inspiration of various traditions within the historic communist movement. In contexts as diverse as Czechoslovakia, France, and China, official communist parties found themselves under fire from radical movements, especially of youth.

A snapshot of the state of communist parties and movements around 1968 might lead to the conclusion that in those parts of the world where communist ideology originated—the USSR and Eastern Europe—communist rule was in crisis and beginning a process of decline, whereas in the developing world, particularly Asia, it was a movement in expansion. As a summary, this is not untrue, but the situation was more complex. Communist ideology was able in the 1960s to inspire individuals and groups

around the world where it resonated with calls for liberation and liberty, and where it was able to provide otherwise diverse revolutionary movements with a shared language and set of organizational principles. Communism was successful where it was able to capture a spirit of optimism and possibilities, of new beginnings, and where it responded to calls for bold agency and heroic action. Communism also appealed where it drew on elements of traditional and local culture. And finally, the spirit of revolutionary communism was influential where it responded to real social conflict and inequality and to resistance to old and new forms of privilege—be that in the context of colonialism, Western market-based economies, or communist regimes themselves. This article will attempt to demonstrate both the expansion and erosion of communism's ideological and social power, by focusing on developments in Europe, the USSR, South East Asia, and China.

The 1960s were a decade dominated by the expression of desires for liberation and self-determination.[3] Despite strongly varying local situations, 'liberation' emerges as a keyword that can meaningfully connect the mass social and political movements that destabilized the existing order in a number of countries. Out of very different political traditions, across Europe, Asia, and the Americas radicalized groups of people mobilized around new-found desires for self-expression, for recognition, for social justice, and for liberty. Such calls always contained a utopian element. The word utopia here connotes at least three elements: a call for the *complete* transformation of society, to be begun in the urgency of the here and now, and requiring collective rather than individual action.[4] The utopian politics of 1968 included student and youth uprisings in Japan, France, Mexico, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and Italy; massive workers' protests and revived class conflict in France, Italy, and other European countries; reform and opposition movements in communist regimes such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia; the civil rights movement and Black Power in the USA; the guerrilla war fought in South Vietnam and anti-colonial struggles in South East Asia and Africa more broadly; and feminist movements in various parts of the world.[5]

Although the content of these struggles differed dramatically, forms of action and languages were to some degree shared across national boundaries. Such forms of action included, for instance, non-violent protests such as sit-ins at university campuses, and spontaneous work stoppages and workplace sabotage. Equally transnational was a body of texts, read by rebels and radicals across Europe, the Americas, Asia, and the Middle East, and including, for instance, the writings by Asian communist leaders Mao Zedong and Hồ Chí Minh, Martinique-born French anti-imperialist thinker Franz Fanon, and Nation of Islam and Black Power leader Malcolm X. Common to rebellious movements across these different parts of the world was, further, the fact that the 'spirit of 1968' was carried by a yet unbroken link between political change and innovative cultural expression. Late 1960s radicalism cannot be understood without fully grasping the links between cultural and political critique. Some historians have separated culture and politics, arguing that while the desired cultural transformations were achieved, radical political programmes failed.[6] More recently, however, scholars have re-emphasized the

synergy between culture and politics, and concluded that the separation of the two has had more to do with how the legacy of 1968 has been constructed.[7]

In the West, the questioning of everyday life—and everything it meant in terms of established moral and sexual norms, social hierarchies, urban alienation, and work routines—was at the heart of this politico-cultural revolt. Such cultural critiques found their origins in earlier avant-garde art movements—the Situationists, a transnational Paris-based art group who in turn were inspired by Lettrism, Beat Poets in the US such as Allen Ginsberg, and the Amsterdam Provo movement—which adopted a more playful approach to politics, though not less serious in its interrogation of conformist lifestyles. Situationists intuited that the rapid rise of mass communications, including television, billboard advertising, and leisure press, had created a 'society of the spectacle', in the phrase coined by leading Situationist Guy Debord, in which 'authentic' social interaction had been replaced by its fictitious, commodified, and standardized representation.[8] Similarly, as argued by US-based philosopher Herbert Marcuse, previously affiliated with the Frankfurt School, the neo-Marxist Institute for Social Research founded in 1923, mass consumption and mass production had created a culture in which people were driven by false needs.[9] While Marcuse made use of both Marxist and psychoanalytical concepts, others, such as the French sociologist of everyday life Henri Lefebvre, found in Marxism the tools for a new cultural critique of capitalism.

Non-conventional forms of self-expression were not limited to cultural elites. Working-class youth from the 1950s distinguished themselves from what they understood to be the complacent generation of their parents by adopting provocative lifestyle elements (clothing, music, dance, and so on). The 'Halbstarken' in West Germany were an example of such rebelliousness, their cultural forms expressing a new awareness of both generational identity and class belonging.[10] Class identity remained significant, but was infused with new forms of differentiation: in the UK, for instance, the Beat and pop music scene originated in working-class milieux yet eventually opened up a new terrain of experimentation with gender and sexuality. In some East European societies, too, such as East Germany, jeans and rock 'n' roll became core elements of a new youth culture, offering transgressive models of femininity and masculinity.[11]

In the USA, unlike in Europe, Marxist thought and class consciousness had by and large been exhausted as sources of political rebellion. This, however, did not make the revolts there any less political. The rebellious spirit of the 1960s crystallized around two issues: the Cold War and intervention in South East Asia, on the one hand, and racial segregation and inequality, on the other. 'Civil rights' was established as a body of thought and practice, effectively exposing the limitations of individual and collective rights in the country that called itself the freest in the world. The 'Free Speech Movement' at the University of California at Berkeley in 1964 inspired young people around the world by developing non-violent methods for exposing the limitations of the democratic state. Among African-Americans, civil rights activism gathered momentum by the mid-1960s, in no small way thanks to the leadership of the Revd Martin Luther King Jr., shot in 1964. By the late 1960s, however, numerous voices in African-American communities, and in radicalized student groups, were frustrated with continued white

hegemony and with the limits of the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964. The Black Panther Party argued against the earlier strategy of integration into mainstream society. Despite these different approaches, the question of racial equality formed a rallying point not only for African-Americans, but also for white students, intellectuals, leftists, and others wishing to oppose racial segregation, social inequality, cultural and sexual norms, or military intervention abroad. Opposition to the war in Vietnam radicalized what was originally a campaign against the draft and the loss of American lives, into a more radical movement against what was now referred to as US imperialism. The notion of colonization was a powerful one, describing at once intervention abroad, and racial inequality and a sense of powerlessness and alienation at home, for which the term 'colonization of the mind' was sometimes used.[12]

From the Soviet perspective, there was much to be welcomed in these processes of challenge to the status quo. Yet the cross-fertilization of various strands of radical thought threatened to undermine Moscow's control over the European communist parties, both on the east and west of the continent. In addition, in the Soviet-led 'world communist movement' the events of 1968 marked the culmination of a process that had started in 1956, whereby a growing number of communist-inspired parties, movements, and regimes escaped Soviet attempts to impose discipline. The communist world was now characterized by 'centrifugal tendencies' or, as put more positively by the Italian communists, a tendency towards 'polycentrism'. Especially in the Third World the appeal of communist ideology was such that an array of movements and leaders felt inspired by it, without fully accepting the doctrinal or organizational constraints imposed by Moscow, or indeed any other aspiring communist hegemon.

Communism on the 'Old' Continent: The Passing of the Post-War Era

Europe: East and West

Notwithstanding different contexts, a shared spirit of optimism prevailed across Eastern and Western Europe in 1968. The rise of the 'new Left' in Western Europe resulted from the coming together of various critical interrogations: the end of the British and French empires and the shift to a post-colonial world order; ongoing critiques of Soviet global strategies and domestic policies since 1956; a rediscovery of the early humanist Marx. Broadly defined, the new Left involved not only new political parties—such as the Unified Socialist Party (PSU) in France and Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP) in Italy—but also an array of anti-imperialist, peace, and student movements.[13] The Marxist revival was based on the exchange of texts and discourses across the continental divide, including for instance the rediscovery of Hungarian Marxist György Lukács in

the West. It was most visible in journals such as *New Left Review* in the UK, *Quaderni piacentini* in Italy, and the Yugoslav *Praxis*. Although these East–West exchanges sometimes involved misunderstanding, a pan-European tapestry of 'heterodox' Marxism emerged.[14] Central to it was a problem that had been marginalized from Marxist-based political programmes for too long: the place and meaning of individual liberty and individual agency in socialism.[15] While in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia the key demands shared by reformers and opponents of the regime involved civil liberties such as freedom of speech, in France and Italy student protesters were driven by a reclaiming of individual liberty which they felt was being constrained by both traditional communism and market capitalism.

Among the most important ideological points of reference shared by oppositional movements in East and West were the early-twentieth-century experiments of council communism in Russia, Hungary, and Italy, anti-Stalinist Trotskyism, and Yugoslavian experiments in self-management. When during the French student and worker protests of May 1968 Daniel and Raphael Cohn-Bendit declared communism to be 'senile', they were not making a point about the entire political tradition carrying that name. Rather, they referred very specifically to the French Communist Party (PCF) and its policies since 1945.[16] They, along with the bulk of the French student movement, sharply criticized the PCF for the absence of ideological renewal, its reformist strategy based on participation in state institutions, and its hierarchical structures. They also criticized it for its failure to distance itself from Moscow—notwithstanding its highly unusual, although rather meek, condemnation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Elsewhere, too, in Western Europe student protesters and Left parties condemned the Soviet invasion, including the majority of communist parties, yet this did not imply a wholesale rejection of Soviet history.[17] For most of the student and radical youth groups in France, the Revolution of 1917, and specifically the Soviets as the possible nucleus of a revolutionary uprising, remained a positive point of reference.[18]

Nonetheless, across Europe the general trend was towards a Marxism that was disconnected from the ruling ideologies and practices of communist parties whether in or out of power.[19] In the East, aspirations towards the reform of communist rule, expressed with varying degrees of openness between 1956 and 1968, were motivated by a return to the revolutionary impulse of early communist thought and practice, and by the ambition to make the communist project more resonant with rapidly modernizing societies. The Prague Spring was the quintessence of these aspirations. Revisiting Czechoslovakia's early communism as well as its democratic traditions, writers such as the influential Zdeněk Mlynář firmly believed Marxist concepts could be used to develop the idea that was at the heart of the critical revival movement underpinning the Prague Spring, namely that of a democratic form of socialism.[20] To be sure, the Prague Spring partly escaped communist party control. While the new leadership of the Czech oslovakian Communist Party (CPCS) under Alexander Dubček from January 1968 devised and implemented a reform programme including introduction of market reforms, a new state-party relationship, and, crucially, the lifting of press censorship, it was the movement of cultural revival, carried out by members of the public, students,

and intellectuals, which pressured the party leadership to maintain the momentum of reform, as well as giving people a flavour of democracy.

The Prague Spring was rooted in the new context of European détente, which involved state and non-state initiatives across the continent, and aimed at creating East–West cooperation in the economic, cultural, military, and diplomatic spheres. Much affinity existed between the ideas of democratic and gradual 'roads to socialism' as they were debated in the communist parties of Italy, Spain, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. The most original reform-communist projects pivoted on the idea that sociopolitical change in Eastern and Western Europe was a mutually dependent process.[21] Somewhat simplified, the conviction was that while Western countries needed to be made more socialist, Eastern regimes needed to become more democratic. There was a striking resonance between the writings of Eastern and Western heterodox Marxists in this regard. Zdeněk Mlynář, among others, understood the Prague Spring as a return to European Marxist traditions, made possible by the onset of détente on the continent.[22] In the Italian Communist Party (PCI), critical leftists such as Pietro Ingrao argued for firm solidarity with the Prague Spring, understanding it to be intimately linked to the recent processes of radicalization in the universities and the factories across Western Europe, all pointing towards new forms of 'socialism from below'.[23]

The crushing of the Prague Spring provoked across the continent a loss of hope regarding the reformability of 'really existing socialism'. Leonid Brezhnev's justification for the invasion, known in the West as the Brezhnev Doctrine, asserted that the socialist states had an obligation to intervene, militarily if necessary, to safeguard a socialist regime in another country. It made explicit what had been clear since at least the invasion of Hungary in 1956: that communist rule in Eastern Europe was based not on democratic legitimacy but on the threat of military intervention.[24] The great irony of 1968 was the fact that the Prague Spring had emerged from the only Warsaw Pact member where domestic support for communism had been substantial in 1948, and that it situated itself in local, and loyal, communist traditions.

The events in Czechoslovakia resonated across Eastern Europe. Polish cities saw student unrest from March 1968, following the ban by the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) of the nineteenth-century play *Dziady* (The Forefathers). Warsaw students made their anger known through letter-writing and rallies. Their actions were the start of a two-month wave of unrest involving the major universities, the Writers' Union, and industrial workers. The events acutely exposed the PPR's lack of political legitimacy and popular support.[25] The authorities' responses were particularly repressive: framing the protests as a 'Zionist' threat, Władysław Gomułka initiated an 'anti-Zionist' campaign, which saw the rampant purging of Jewish citizens from jobs and led thousands to emigrate. Taking advantage of anti-Semitism in Polish society, and building on the USSR's breaking of diplomatic relations with Israel the previous year, the PPR was thus able to deflect the political crisis by scapegoating a particular section of society.[26]

A similar initial pattern of the dynamics of protest—triggered by students, spilling over to intellectuals and workers—occurred in Yugoslavia, although both the political meaning and the outcome of the Yugoslav summer of discontent were of a very different nature. Here, the student movement was explicitly loyal to a variety of communist

traditions: Belgrade students in June 1968 renamed their faculty the 'Red University Karl Marx'; nineteenth-century radicals such as Kropotkin were rediscovered; and Western Marxists such as Daniel Guérin were widely read. While Yugoslavia's unique status in Cold War Europe gave its citizens greater access to Western debates than other East Europeans, its membership of the Non-Aligned Movement meant that radical anti-imperialist thought was influential here. Student and worker protests crystallized around the notion of self-management: a core concept of the official ideology of the Yugoslav League of Communists (LCY), the protesters denouncing the failure to fully implement it.[27] Josip Broz Tito, while claiming to be supportive of the revival of Marxism across the globe, not least of the student protests in France, felt threatened. As a result, state responses were an ambiguous mix of political repression and discursive inclusion. Yet Yugoslav society was not pacified: Bosnian miners went on strike in June 1970, while students at Ljubljana University occupied their campus in May the following year. Open intellectual dissent in Croatia in 1971 grew into a wider 'Croatian Spring', enjoying the support of part of the Republic's party apparatus. Discourses of dissent were here transformed: while the heterodox-Marxist protest basis was eclipsed, nationalism became the vehicle for opposition against the communist regime—a sign of things to come.[28]

Although accelerated by the events of 1968, the gradual abandoning of Marxist thought as a framework for transformative politics resulted, more fundamentally, from the absence of generational renewal. As argued by Marci Shore, communism in Eastern Europe was rooted in a generational identity: the generation shaped politically by the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, the post-war establishment of communist rule, and Stalinism.[29] In Czechoslovakia and to a lesser degree in other East European countries, many belonging to this core Stalinist generation had become convinced reform communists in the decade following 1956. As they approached retirement in the 1970s, the generation that succeeded them was shaped politically by the crushing of the Prague Spring. This generation did not have a strong memory of the 1930s–40s and its politics was not shaped to the same extent by anti-fascism. A similar generational shift occurred, perhaps less sharply, in Western Europe: In France and Italy, anti-fascism was now reclaimed by the radical Left and by the young rebellious, while the communist parties lost control over its historical interpretation and memory.[30]

The USSR: Towards Erosion

In the Soviet Union the long post-Stalinist period from 1953 to 1991, usually referred to in the historiography on the USSR as 'late socialism', is often understood in terms of two distinct phases: the years up to 1964/8, characterized by domestic and international thaw, and the period thereafter, characterized by stagnation. These phases broadly correspond to two generations, the first of which was politically shaped by the optimism and drive for reform of the Khrushchev era.[31] Following 1956, Khrushchev attempted to replace Stalinism with a 'purer' interpretation of Marxism-Leninism, underpinned by a teleological belief in technological and scientific progress. Sections of the mid-ranking party

apparatus and state bureaucracy felt encouraged to engage in a search for economic reform and, less explicitly, in explorations of democratic and party reform. Typically, these reformers belonged to families with a solid Bolshevik history.[32] They adhered strongly to the discourse of 'returning to Leninism' and were in some cases inspired by the anti-Stalinist opposition of the late 1920s, notably Nikolai Bukharin. Their notion of reform, however, tended to be technocratic and bureaucratic, and involved little reflection on the revival of civil society or even the role to be played by workers.[33]

Parallel to this, a 'spontaneous de-Stalinization' manifested itself, mainly among urban intellectuals who engaged in debates on 'truth' and 'sincerity' in Soviet society. Thus, an alliance was formed from the early 1960s between reform communists and critical intellectuals, located mainly in the urban centres of Russia, Belarus, and the Ukraine. Their shared optimism seemed to spring from real improvements in everyday living conditions and the opportunities to project Soviet global power created by decolonization.[34] Suggestions for a rethinking of the role of the party emerged somewhat more mutedly, for instance in the writings of economist Vladimir P. Shkredov who proposed greater autonomy for economic actors vis-à-vis the party, including a mixed system of private and state ownership of enterprises, and for the party to return to its 'original' role as a vanguard organization, limiting its remit to education and overall guidance.[35]

Following Khrushchev's removal from power in 1964 political repression was intensified, culminating in the 1966 trial of Yuli M. Daniel and Andrei D. Sinyavsky, who were charged with 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda', marking a return to the era of show trials This led some members of the Writers' Union and other intellectuals to express their opposition, and the nucleus of a human rights movement was born. Dissident nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov, for instance, in his influential essay of May 1968, 'Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom', pointed to nuclear warfare as a *global* danger, requiring concerted action across the Iron Curtain.[36] Ultimately, though, dissent had limited support among ordinary people—a situation that contrasts with Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968. More generally, however, as in other communist regimes, there were growing signs among ordinary people of resentment of social inequality and privilege, especially as associated with the political leadership.[37] One reason for the relative weakness of critical opinion in the USSR was that here the regime could more easily claim to be legitimate, owing to the fact that, unlike the regimes of the Eastern Bloc, it had emerged out of a genuine revolution.

If the majority of Russians seemingly accepted the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Kremlin's justification, namely that there was a real danger that West Germany would engineer the 'return' to capitalism, the Czechoslovak crisis did help to erode confidence in communism here too. Critiquing classic historiographical interpretations that have presented the Soviet population's attitudes towards the regime in terms of a sharp distinction between accommodation and resistance, Alexei Yurchak has argued that the erosion of allegiance to the system can be observed in the disintegration of stable meanings given to the words, rituals, and social exchanges of communist rule, and of communist party control over those meanings, leading to a situation in which they became 'diverse, multiple and unpredictable'.[38]

Communism in the Third World: The Spectre of Decolonization

The processes of decolonization that swept the world following 1945 dramatically reconfigured the context in which global communism operated, reshaping its ideology, strategies, and bases of support. Communism came to be suffused with the language of anti-imperialism, and this not only in the Third World itself but also in the Northern hemisphere. 'Decolonization' and 'self-emancipation' became powerful visions, applicable to the most diverse contexts around the world, from guerrilla warfare in South East Asia to the Black struggle in the USA. It was, above all, developments in South East Asia during the 1960s that demonstrated to the eyes of the world communism's potential to contribute to, or even guide, such calls for liberation. Here, communism's 'power of prophecy' was able to capture the sense of an irreversible tidal wave of change, especially in Vietnam.[39] Yet decolonization not only opened up new possibilities for the communist world, it also created ruptures. The most consequential such challenge was the conflict between the USSR and China. This resulted from a combination of great-power rivalry and ideological differences. Chairman Mao Zedong disapproved of Khrushchev's foreign policy, particularly 'peaceful coexistence with the West' and the building of broad coalitions with non-communist forces in the Third World. Soviet experts were withdrawn from China by 1960, and three years later the alliance broke down completely.[40] Although revolutionary leaders such as Hồ Chí Minh in Vietnam did not welcome the conflict between the two communist giants, it was this conflict that placed strategy in the Third World at the heart of communist debate globally.

Vietnam: The 'People's War'

In the second half of the 1960s 'Vietnam' became a powerful symbol for revolutionary change throughout the world, in a number of different ways. While to communist parties the events evidenced the expansion of the world communist movement, to resistance fighters in the (post-) colonial world it embodied the successes of a new revolutionary tide, whose point of gravity lay in Third World grass-roots mobilization of peasants and workers, rather than in a centralized global communist strategy. Argentinian revolutionary Ernesto 'Che' Guevara at the 1967 Tri-Continental Conference in Havana accompanied his bold call for 'two, three, many Vietnams' with a sharp critique of both China and the USSR: 'The solidarity of the progressive world with the Vietnamese people has something of the bitter irony of the plebeians cheering on the gladiators in the Roman circus.'[41] The bitter disappointment at what was felt to be insufficient support from the two communist powers for Third World struggles was clear. Support from the USSR and China for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in the North and for the armed struggle in South Vietnam was, although real, more limited than might have been expected, and rather

late in coming. In 1960, both Mao and Khrushchev had warned the North Vietnamese Workers' Party (VWP) against building an insurrection in the South. The USSR had abandoned its enthusiasm of the early 1960s for Third World revolutionary movements, as a number of communist defeats, most notably in Algeria and Indonesia in 1965–6, led the Soviet leadership to critically reconsider its earlier strategy of broad anti-imperialist alliances. Only from 1969 did Moscow adopt policies based on the possibility of communist victory in Vietnam. Its financial and military assistance, while significant, arose from a sense of duty rather than revolutionary enthusiasm, and Moscow increasingly understood its role in South East Asia as that of peacemaker. The role played by Maoist China, on the other hand, has been described by O. A. Westad as 'high on rhetoric, low on action'.[42] The struggle in Vietnam appeared to be everything Chairman Mao Zedong might have hoped for, offering a model and symbol for communist revolution in the Third World, as well as potentially serving to increase Maoist influence in the communist world. However, timing was bad for China. Weakened by the Cultural Revolution, Chinese policy in 1966–8 was fundamentally oriented towards domestic affairs. From 1968 Beijing, like Moscow, exercised a moderating influence on the Vietnamese communists.[43]

Despite its global impact, communism in Vietnam was successful primarily because its bases of support and policies were strongly locally embedded. In the context of French colonial rule during the interwar period, Indochinese communism had shaped itself as a popular movement enjoying support among a variety of social groups: peasants, students and intellectuals, urban workers, and the lower middle classes. Hồ Chí Minh, leader of the VWP from the 1940s to the 1960s, believed in an unbreakable bond between communism and liberation from colonial yoke, yet his politics contained a degree of ideological flexibility.[44] His political project was centred on liberation from colonialism along with a radical improvement in people's economic conditions, combined with a degree of political participation. A new generation of revolutionary cadres and activists had been shaped by the events of 1945, when the French attempted to restore the colonial order, triggering the start of a nine-year war. The Geneva Accords of 1954 had seen the division of the country into a communist-led Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North and a Western-backed Republic of Vietnam in the South. The start of revolutionary insurgency in the South in 1959 gave the VWP in the North a renewed sense of purpose.[45] Following Ngo Dinh Diem's death in 1963, the insurgency developed into a general uprising, based partly on Maoist notions of guerrilla combat and psychological warfare, and provoked a stepping-up of US military intervention in 1965. On 30 January 1968, the VWP's People's Army initiated a 'General Offensive and Uprising' in South Vietnam, known in the West as the Tet Offensive. As it gathered momentum, a multi-layered strategy involving combined guerrilla and conventional warfare destabilized the South Vietnamese regime. The USA sent increased ground troops in February and started bombing North Vietnam in March. From the autumn, peace talks began after the US suspended bombing of the North, but although the US began to withdraw ground forces, the war continued. Indeed it would be extended into Cambodia and Laos before a ceasefire finally came in 1973.

The grass-roots support enjoyed by Vietnamese communism was a classic case of strength through war mobilization. At the same time, it drew on elements of pre-colonial

culture, notably a conception of revolutionary change as cyclical and as the restoration of a past golden age, and familism.[46] During the 1950s–60s, North and South Vietnamese communists made frequent use of the metaphors of 'blood' and 'family' to harness grass-roots support; in rural areas, this to some degree substituted for 'class'. Women's revolutionary contribution was seen as vital, and they were explicitly called upon to fight colonial oppression and US intervention.[47] The DRV 'rewarded' women's economic, military, and political contribution to the building of socialism by granting new political rights in 1967, notably mandating women's participation in political organs at all levels. In the South, despite great attempts at drawing women into revolutionary struggle, women's social roles, although powerful in some respects, remained locked into traditional patriarchal society. In the 'People's War', kinship lineages and village cohesiveness proved more important than ever.[48] Here, the communist representation of the future utopia drew on elements of traditional culture and social structure rather than appeal to the promise of rapid modernization as communist regimes did elsewhere.

China: The Politics of Youth

Between 1966 and 1976, the People's Republic of China was in the grip of the Cultural Revolution. Provoking both admiration and perplexity in the communist and the Western world, the Cultural Revolution had a negative impact on all layers of the Chinese population, especially intellectuals, but not excluding workers in the cities and peasants. It involved a dramatic dismantling of large sections of the state and party apparatuses—something entirely without precedent in the communist world. Mao Zedong and his supporters intended to 'revitalize' all levels of administration by ridding them of what were perceived to be 'capitalist roaders'. Mao believed that he would find natural allies among 'the masses'—specifically youth, students, workers, and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Instead, the exacerbation of conflict in, for instance, educational institutions, factories, and state and party institutions led the entire country into a near-general state of civil war. The Cultural Revolution was born out of Mao's perception that in the wake of the disasters caused by the Great Leap Forward (1958–60), the relatively moderate policies pursued by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping threatened to undermine the revolutionary process and even push the country towards capitalist social relations. Following the Sino-Soviet split Mao came to the conclusion that in the USSR a privileged stratum of bureaucrats had emerged that had 'converted the function of serving the masses into the privilege of dominating them'.[49] Haunted by the USSR as a negative model, Mao seemed genuinely to fear the rise of what he understood to be 'revisionist' tendencies in China. In unleashing the Cultural Revolution in 1966, he hoped to combat growing bureaucratism by mobilizing young people to oppose those in authority. There was, the Chairman maintained, a need for 'uninterrupted revolution' at all levels of the state and party structures and in society at large.[50] The Cultural Revolution, initiated as a top-down attempt to reshape the party and the state, soon got out of hand. Mao's invitation to young people to unlimitedly challenge authority rebounded on him

with a vengeance, as he lost control over some of the very youth and worker organizations that he had created. As student and worker factionalism descended into chaos in the spring of 1967, Mao endorsed the setting up of 'revolutionary committees' at the provincial level as a mean to restore order. As opposing 'mass' organizations slugged it out, thousands of civilians died in pitched battles. Paradoxically, as radical students in the West began to look to the Cultural Revolution to legitimize their struggles against authority, 1968 was the moment when in China a modicum of state authority over the radical movement was restored. In spring 1968 Lin Biao strengthened his control over the PLA and, with its backing, the 'revolutionary committees' were by autumn finally established in all provinces. Soon the dismantling of Red Guards began.[51]

It was in its voluntarism and emphasis on the immediacy of political agency, rather than in a more traditional Marxian emphasis on determining economic and social change, that Maoism proved attractive to radicalized youth in the Western world. They were excited by the 'uninterrupted revolution' being unleashed in the People's Republic of China, which they contrasted to the bureaucratism of the USSR. Sectors of Western youth empathized with the millenarian rejection of anything 'old', with the fierce desire of Maoist youth to create a rupture with the past.[52] Moreover, the political exaltation of revolutionary youth was accompanied by repoliticization of class politics. Whereas in the USSR class conflict had been declared resolved, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from the mid-1960s reinfused political conflict with the language of class, and citizens were called upon to identify and denounce those perceived to be 'class enemies'. As happened elsewhere under communist rule, 'class' became the cloak under which variously motivated denunciations and purging occurred, but Mao's insistence on the perpetual rejuvenation of class conflict and his understanding of class consciousness as a matter of choice rather than background appealed to radical youth in the West. Most West European parties, including the PCI, PCF, and the smaller Belgian, Dutch, and Scandinavian parties, were plagued by Maoist tendencies within the ranks, which led to small breakaway parties. But across Asia and parts of the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa, Maoism was influential as a strategy for revolt in colonial contexts, a radical language, and a set of critiques of the USSR, causing a blow to Soviet-aligned communist parties.

Conclusion

Around 1968, communism as a set of ideologies and movements faced a number of opportunities and tensions, due to geographic expansion and diversification. In rapidly modernizing societies, not least in the post-colonial world, communism was able to bridge the past and the future. While in some contexts it successfully based its legitimacy on responsiveness to traditional social forms and cultures, in others, communist rule was able to capture the spirit of the times by projecting 'the new' and embodying future visions. Communist thought and strategy were thus renewed in 1968, but also fragmented, and their limitations were exposed. It is significant that revolutionaries and

radical reformers around the world—in situations as diverse as Vietnam, China, Mexico, Italy, and Czechoslovakia—referred explicitly to the concepts of communism (such as 'class') as well as to its methods (for instance, factory councils and soviets), yet often to denounce the inconsistencies and hypocrisies of the Soviet-led 'world communist movement'. At the same time, communist thought and practice were, especially in the West, infused with new notions of revolution that were alien to the Soviet tradition: from 'sexual liberation' to psychoanalysis and anti-racism. Communist parties in power, such as the Soviet and Polish ones, and in some cases those not in power such as the French, sharply repressed what they understood to be 'unorthodox' revisions of communist strategy and ideology in 1968–9. In countries under communist rule this greatly contributed to the process of erosion of support for these regimes and for Marxist doctrine more generally.

Notes

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18. On the inspiration drawn from early twentieth-century workers' councils, see F. Georgi (ed.), *Autogestion. La Dernière Utopie?* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2002).
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CHAPTER 9

1989

MATTHIAS MIDDELL

Two Ways of Telling the Story?

There is no doubt that 1989 marks a caesura in history. Yet there are two ways of telling the story of that year. In the first and narrow version of the story, 1989 marks the end of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the military framework (the Warsaw Pact) and the economic framework (Comecon) of the Eastern Bloc. In the second and broad version, 1989 brings to visibility processes that had been at work for several decades undermining the power blocs of the Cold War era, and marks a breakthrough into a new world that had implications for the West as much as for the East. For some proponents of a broad version, 1989 signalled a victory for the United States and its allies over the communist world, and the beginning of an era in which the USA would maintain a long-lasting position of hegemony within a generalized liberal capitalist order. For others, such as Eric Hobsbawm, 1989 signified something broader than the end of communism: for him, it marked the end of the 'short twentieth century', which had been characterized principally by the communist challenge to capitalism launched in 1917. In his view, communism had ironically helped to save liberal capitalism by allying with it in the struggle against fascism in the mid-twentieth century. Having overcome fascist dictatorship, capitalism had, after more than four decades, finally overcome the communist threat.[1]

If we look at the narrower story first, we can see that it holds for Europe, in that the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe marked the end of an era, transforming the political landscape along democratic lines and leading, first, to the unification of Germany in 1990 and, from 2004, to the accession of eight former communist states into the European Union, with other states following in their wake. However, the effects of the demise of the Soviet Union were felt well beyond Europe—above all, by regimes that had relied on the political and economic support of the Soviet Union. In Afghanistan under Mohammad Najibullah all reference to socialism was removed from the constitution in

1990, and the following year Mengistu Haile Mariam fled from Ethiopia, leading to the fall of the Soviet-backed regime. In addition, the effects of 1989 were felt 'in over a dozen other countries mainly in Southern Africa and Latin America that had, with varying degrees of plausibility, justified their authoritarian systems by reference to the threat of "international" communism'.[2] The effects of 1989 on anti-communist regimes were perhaps most dramatically evinced in South Africa, where the unbanning of the African National Congress, in which communist influence was significant, and the release of Nelson Mandela on 2 February 1990, marked the beginning of the transition to democracy, a transition that would have implications for the whole African subcontinent.

The narrower story of 1989 as one about the 'end of communism' requires considerable qualification. The survival of communist regimes in China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, or Cuba shows that communism was far from finished. In the case of China, in contrast to those of North Korea and Cuba, it is clear that far more than survival was at stake. Chinese communists, who had long condemned Soviet communism, nevertheless insisted on the appropriateness of their political and social arrangements for the advancement of their country. The story of 1989 as the end of communism is further complicated by the continued success of leftist movements in Nepal and parts of India. Even in the West, moreover, neo-Marxists maintain that the prospects for Marxist socialism have improved, now that communism has been liberated from its association with Soviet nationalist and imperialist interests.

The broader narrative of 1989, by contrast, sees that year as marking the end of the bipolar world order established after 1945, and the breakthrough of a new order, the ramifications of which have been felt far more widely than in just the communist world. In December 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev, general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, gave a speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in which he emphasized that a new world order was possible, one based on disarmament, integration into a single global economy, and cooperation of the big powers, with the UN transformed into an instrument of peacekeeping. On 11 November 1990, President George Bush Sr. spoke of a 'new world order' when addressing Congress and he repeated this formula in a State of the Union address on 29 January 1991: 'What is at stake is more than one small country, it is a big idea—a new world order, where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind: peace and security, freedom, and the rule of law.'[3] The world order that has appeared in the two decades since 1989 has hardly borne out such optimism, but it has seen remarkable new developments, such as a new imbalance in power relations between the USA and the Russian Federation, the growing dependence of the US economy on Chinese imports and on China's willingness to hold US debt, the rapid economic development of the so-called BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), and the emergence of a new battle line between the USA and radical Islamist movements following 9/11 in 2001. None of these developments was completely new: China's growth and the parallel decline in North American traditional industries had started in the early 1980s; the conflict with politicized Islam originated with Khomeini's revolution in Iran in 1979; and the rapprochement of Russian and American political elites began already in Geneva 1985 and

in Reykjavik 1986, when the elimination of nuclear weapons, human rights, and mobility for Russian dissidents were put on the political agenda. Nevertheless if the lineaments of a new world order are still indistinct, it is clear that 1989 marked the end of the political order instituted after the Second World War.

The logics of loyalty to one bloc, on which the Cold War was based, and of territorially defined polities, on which the system of international relations rested, came under increasing pressure from the 1970s. The increased willingness of political elites in the West and East to come together was partly a response to the pressure from transnational movements, such as those for peace, disarmament, and environmental protection, and particularly to global economic trends. Technological innovation allowed for faster and more flexible production, and geographically concentrated forms of production were challenged by transnationally organized commodity chains. As economic globalization advanced, governments had to negotiate the contradictory pressures of world markets and of sustaining national economies. Industrial elites were faced with coordinating thousands of suppliers, and with integrating the design, marketing, accountancy, and other services that was warranted by rapid changes in consumer demand. In this second, broader story of 1989, therefore, the end of communism is but one element that marks the definitive decline of the old world order, an end that was itself rooted in deeper socio-economic and political developments. The effect of these developments was felt particularly acutely in communist countries, where the political class was directly responsible for economic performance. But the economic travails of the post-communist states in Eastern Europe were a reflection not only of the damage wrought on industry and agriculture during the communist era but also of the difficulties of integrating economies into new global commodity chains. In the case of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) this happened fast, as a result of speedy unification with West Germany, but elsewhere, especially in south-eastern Europe, this has proved a more painful and protracted process.

There are thus two ways of telling the story of 1989. In one, the focus is on the end of communism, and the story is largely one of decomposition and fragmentation, with Tito's Yugoslavia only the most flagrant example of the processes at work. In the other, the focus is on the end of Cold War and the story is fundamentally one about how deep structural changes in the global economic order, together with forces eroding the integrity of the nation-state, served to undermine the bipolar order instituted after the Second World War. While the first narrative has the advantage of focusing on the events in Eastern and Central Europe, and on the internal forces that precipitated the fall of communism, the broader narrative has the advantage of exploring the implications of 1989 for the non-communist as well as the communist worlds.

Historical Analogies

In searching for an explanation of 1989 historians and other social scientists have sought to compare it with previous caesuras in world history, above all, with the French

Revolution of 1789. The fact that both ''89s' had a worldwide resonance invites comparison of them as global moments. Such a comparison highlights the interplay between the internal developments that caused the breakdown of the *anciens régimes* and external pressures arising from wider, global developments. For years, historians of the French Revolution emphasized the failure of the monarch's attempts to make the French people pay for increasing state expenditure through higher taxes and to reorganize the economy so that investment could be mobilized in spite of the privileges of the Church and nobility. More recently, however, historians have paid more attention to the external pressures, to competition with the British for influence, markets, and prestige, that weakened the French state. Worldwide competition in India, the Caribbean, and North America stretched the state's resources to the point where it was unable to survive without a fundamental reorganization of its socio-economic structures, political regime, and military forces. The militarily successful but financially ruinous participation in the war for North American independence proved to be only the last nail in the coffin of a regime that had become increasingly dependent on international finance. Of course, the storming of the Bastille cannot be seen as a direct consequence of such structural processes. The agency of real people was necessary to realize the political potential of the 'revolutionary' situation. Political and social transformation required people with courage and vision, willing to risk their lives in a confrontation with ruling elites that had all the weapons on their side.

It is tempting to view the revolutions of 1989 through the same historiographical template. On coming to power in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev recognized that the Soviet economy was running into the ground as a result of the arms race. In the 1950s high hopes had been placed in Comecon as a new form of transnational economic cooperation, but it had failed to produce the desired economies of scale or the specializations associated with comparative advantage or to effect the transition into post-Fordist forms of production. Instead it had increased tensions between the countries of the Eastern Bloc, who felt they gave more to the alliance than they got out of it. Under Leonid Brezhnev, general secretary from 1964 to 1982, the Soviet economy continued to rely on the export of raw materials. With the onset of perestroika from 1986, Gorbachev hoped to save the Soviet Union by lightening the burden of military expenditure and by modernizing industrial production, trading Russia's enormous wealth in raw materials for Western technology. The attempt to carry out economic and political reform simultaneously, however, eroded the power of the party-state, the command-administrative economy, and the structures of imperial dominance, leading to the rapid break-up of the system. The unravelling of the system stimulated demands for independence on the part of the satellite countries of Eastern and Central Europe, Ukraine, and the Baltic States; and the Russian regions, too, began to demand greater autonomy from the centre. Gorbachev lost against Yeltsin who understood much earlier that the Soviet empire would have to be dismantled if the stability of the Russian heartland was not to be threatened.

These structural problems caused Gorbachev to review the political relationship between the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. In Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968 the Soviet Union had intervened militarily to curb

reform-oriented factions in the communist parties. In 1981 in Poland it had backed General Wojciech Jaruzelski's introduction of martial law. By the early 1980s, however, part of the Soviet leadership reckoned the political and economic costs of military intervention in the affairs of the Eastern Bloc were simply too high. The countries under Soviet hegemony had to be allowed to go their own way. At this point bold action to exploit the structurally generated crisis became crucial. The Hungarian government, in hock to international finance, was the first to realize that the Soviet government was unlikely to step in to prevent it opening its western border. In August 1989, therefore, it allowed more than 600 East Germans on holiday in the country to cross into Austria. On 11 September, it opened its border permanently and over the next weeks thousands of citizens of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) travelled to West Germany via Austria. A furious GDR government banked on the Soviet Union intervening to bring the Hungarian comrades to heal. But on 7 October 1989, Gorbachev made a historical speech in Berlin, in which he claimed that 'those who are too late will be condemned by life'. On 8 October, Erich Honecker, general secretary of the Socialist Unity Party, warned that ongoing 'riots' (i.e. peaceful demonstrations) in Leipzig were 'directed against the constitutional basis of our socialist state', and were 'to be put down immediately'. The following day—the 'Tag der Entscheidung' or Decision Day—70,000 people demonstrated peacefully in Leipzig and the Stasi did not dare to suppress them. On 10–11 October, a crisis-wracked meeting of the Politburo announced that it was ready to engage in dialogue with the people on 'economic efficiency and its benefit to all, democratic coexistence and committed involvement, a good supply of commodities and adequate pay, realistic media, possibilities for travel and a healthy environment'. The number of citizens taking to the streets grew by the day. On 16 October more than 100,000 demonstrated in Leipzig to demand that the government recognize New Forum, the civic movement pressing for democratic change, and allow free elections, freedom to travel, a free press, and freedom of expression. On 18 October party leaders forced Honecker to resign. After three weeks, in which the regime struggled to regain control of the burgeoning democratic movement, it announced on 9 November that citizens would be free to travel to the West, causing crowds to begin chipping away at the Berlin Wall. On 1 December, the parliament abrogated the Socialist Unity Party's monopoly of power and two days later the Politburo and Central Committee resigned. The victory of the Christian Democrats on 18 March 1990 paved the way for the unification of Germany. On 3 October 1990 a new regime was established that merged the states of East and West Germany.

Historians who stress the global forces that shaped the French Revolution tend to see the revolution less as the beginning of the nineteenth-century process of nation-building than as the outcome of a long-term process of territorialization in which imperial structures were gradually replaced by states that conceived their sovereignty in terms of a monopoly of control over the people and resources of a clearly defined territory.[4] Taking our cue from this shift in historiographical perspective, we can see that 1989 too may productively be considered from the perspective of changes in the nature of the nation-state, changes that were connected to, but enjoyed autonomy from, changes that

were deepening the globalization of the capitalist economy. At the end of the twentieth century it became fashionable to talk about the end of the nation-state and about the world economy becoming 'flatter'. Whether convincing or not, such talk reflected the fact that the territorially defined nation-state, presiding over a national economy, was coming under intense pressure from global value chains and multinational corporations and finding it increasingly difficult to protect key industrial sectors and full employment.[5] The nation-state, too, seemed increasingly ill-equipped to tackle transnational issues such as the control of pollution and disease or the circulation of information and images via the Internet. Western societies had woken up to some of these developments from the 1970s, creating free trade zones and participating in transnational quasi-governmental organizations, such as G7.[6] In this perspective, 1989 appears as the outcome of failure on the part of governments in the communist world to respond to new transnational developments. Jürgen Habermas has argued that the revolutions of that year were no more than 'catch-up' movements that had no new political potential. By contrast, Giovanni Arrighi, Terence Hopkins, and Immanuel Wallerstein read 1989 as a continuation of the global revolution of 1968, connecting anti-systemic forces in the West to those in the East.[7] Whatever one's interpretation, there is little doubt that by 1989 communist regimes were among the last bastions of nationally contained economic and political development. What started out as an internationalist movement had been steadily transformed into a system of states based on closed borders: closed to people who clamoured for free mobility; closed to foreign capital except under heavy bureaucratic control; closed to many consumer goods that the population desired; and closed to the kind of innovative ideas that were necessary to the betterment of the economies and societies. Thus 1989 can be seen as a reaction to the 'shock of the global'.[8] That said, the immediate effects of 1989 were actually to strengthen national sovereignty, which had been so compromised under the Soviet Union. Post-communist states inherited the territorial space of the nation-state, except in the cases of the Soviet Union itself and, most unhappily, Yugoslavia. The Velvet Revolution in Prague ended not only the rule of Gustav Husak but led in 1992–3 to the division of the country into the Czech and the Slovak republics. Yet if the appearance was one of strengthened national sovereignty, the post-communist states had little option but to connect to transnational alliances, notably the European Union, to international markets, and to global patterns of consumption.

There were other ways of responding to the 'shock of the global', best seen in the case of China. The government of Deng Xiaoping from the early 1980s looked to maintain existing political arrangements while opening to the international economy, eventually allowing multinational corporations to utilize the cheap labour made available by the migration of millions of underemployed rural workers to the coastal regions. Countries such as Vietnam followed suit, successfully combining a one-party political system with integration into the global economy. Low wages and curbs on political unrest made this model highly attractive to international capital while the inflow of investment allowed a new middle class to flourish, a middle class not so different from rent-seeking classes in economies based on state-administrated natural resources such as oil or gas.[9]

The Singing Revolution in the Baltic States

One of the least integrated parts of the Soviet Union were the Baltic States which had been forcibly incorporated as a result of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, the secret protocols of which divided eastern Europe into two zones of influence under Nazi Germany and the Soviets. From 1987 nationalists in the Baltic States began to claim that the Soviet Union had occupied their countries illegally. In August 1989 2 million people in Lithuania signed a petition that demanded the withdrawal of the Red Army, while the leadership of the Lithuanian Communist Party started to discuss separation from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In Estonia, nationalists sought to deprive Russian who had settled in the country of voting rights, causing Russian workers to go on strike against these proposed changes. Moscow was confronted with the dilemma of either ordering military intervention or negotiating a 'democratic' way out of the stand-off. Gorbachev opted for the latter. The official party newspaper *Pravda*, while condemning 'nationalist and chauvinist organizations', announced that the Baltic republics would be permitted to challenge union-wide laws; that 'national languages' would be promoted to official state language; and that negotiations about a new relationship of the Baltic States to the Soviet Union would be protected by the Soviet constitution. In an interview with *Pravda* a few days later, the chairman of a committee established by the Congress of People's Deputies to re-evaluate the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, finally admitted that the secret protocols existed but insisted that this did not mean the occupation of the Baltic States had been illegal. By this stage, however, these concessions were insufficient to placate the Baltic peoples, who were increasingly demanding outright independence. At the same time, they were much too far-reaching for conservatives in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, who feared that Gorbachev was willing the break-up of the Soviet Union. On 23 August 1989, the fiftieth anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, a huge human chain of over 1 million people, singing religious and national songs, connected Tallinn to Riga to Vilnius, making this one of the most important events in the history of non-violent protest. Such peaceful protests, which were typical of the revolutions of 1989, made it difficult for the Soviet government to use force to quell the protests and placed it on weak moral ground. When later in August a commission of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian Socialist Soviet Republic declared that the occupation of 1940 had been illegal, the chances of a reformed relationship between Lithuania and the Soviet Union were scuppered. Given its challenge to the Soviet interpretation of the region's past, it was no surprise that in March 1990 Lithuania was the first Baltic republic to declare independence after elections to the Supreme Soviet were won by a pro-independence majority.

The Baltic crisis proved dangerous for the success of Gorbachev's reforms. First, it demanded that he find new answers to the question of how to manage civil conflict at a time when the state of law he envisioned was not yet in place. Second, the debates

over the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact reminded everyone how much the legitimation of the Soviet Union was based on lies and disavowals regarding the country's past. The claim by oppositionist Vitautas Landsbergis that independence was a moral as well as political right chimed with the ongoing debate in the Soviet press about bringing justice to the victims of Stalin's crimes. Third, nationalist agitation challenged the compromise regarding citizenship, ethnicity, and nationhood that lay at the heart of the Soviet Constitution and that reflected the tension between the imperial aspirations of the Soviet Union and its commitment to a territorialized understanding of statehood. The Soviet leadership had neither a clear conception of how to address these issues nor any idea of how to negotiate divergent interests. In view of this, the messages sent by Moscow to the Baltic States were contradictory.

Poland and the Emergence of a Civil Society

Despite the pioneering role of the Baltic States, the cycle of revolutions in 1989 had in fact started in Poland more than a decade earlier. There a confrontation between society and party-state had its origins in strikes that broke out in December 1970 at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk. This adumbrated the formation of the independent trade-union movement Solidarność ten years later. At the heart of the strike was resistance to the government's attempt to raise food prices in order to diminish its dependence on foreign loans. In 1976 it again attempted to do so, triggering another round of labour protests that culminated in a harsh crackdown by the government of Edvard Gierek. The Workers' Defence Committee (KOR) was formed in response, which brought together intellectuals and workers in a bid to create 'new centres of autonomous activity', and represented the first civic organization in the Eastern Bloc to assert independence from the state. In spring 1977 KOR forced the government to declare an amnesty for strikers jailed for their part in the protests of the previous year. However, it was the visit of Pope John Paul II, former archbishop of Kraków, to his homeland in June 1979 that did most to boost the morale of the emerging civil society. The pope's call on his countrymen not to be afraid, coincided with the formation by Lech Walesa and the workers at the Gdańsk shipyard of an Inter-factory Strike Committee in mid-August, whose demands, supported by KOR and the Church, included the right to form independent trade unions. On 31 August 1980, the demand was accepted by the Politburo of the Polish United Workers' Party in the so-called Gdańsk 'Social Accords'. Solidarność, the first independent trade union movement to exist in a communist country, quickly expanded into a broad social movement promoting workers' rights and democratic change. It was supported in this by the Church, which opened up a social space relatively uncontrolled by the communist party, and by intellectuals such as Jacek Kuroń who developed the idea of the self-organized society as a way to create an organizationally decentralized

opposition less vulnerable to suppression by military and police forces. This alliance of a militant labour movement, oppositional intellectuals, and the Church was at the heart of the movement that would eventually cause the communist regime to fall.

For over a year, Solidarność was active as a fully legal workers' representative in a state where the Party itself claimed to govern in the name of the working class. By summer 1981, it had grown to 10 million members, organizing various social forces, including Rural Solidarity.[10] This demonstrated the extent to which pluralism of world views and aspirations was possible under a communist regime, as well as the extent to which it was possible to protect workers' rights even when the economy was severely indebted. Nevertheless, the policy of the government was shaped primarily by the need to resolve a mounting economic crisis. Between 1971 and 1979 its international debt increased from $1.2 billion to $20.5 billion, and so it was driven to try to revive the policy of increasing food prices that had been rejected by workers in the 1970s.[11] On 19 March 1981, twenty-seven Solidarność members in Bydgoszcz who were demanding a farmers' trade union were beaten up by police. This prompted a brief protest strike by around 12 million people, the largest strike ever to take place in the Eastern Bloc. It forced the government to publicize the violence of the security forces and to set up an inquiry. Solidarność now had to decide whether it was prepared to work with the government to resolve the economic crisis, essentially by accepting worsened wages and conditions, or to escalate its political demands into full-blown opposition to the regime and thus risk suppression, possibly via the intervention of the Red Army. By summer more radical forces within Solidarność openly challenged the political monopoly of the Polish United Workers' Party. Continuing pressure from the civil society forced a crisis in the party, which split between those who favoured compromise and insisted on more inner-party democracy and those who argued that resolution of the economic crisis and avoidance of Soviet intervention could only be achieved by a ruthless restoration of order. Meanwhile, the Red Army ominously conducted manoeuvres in the neighbouring Baltic States and Ukraine. The culmination of the stand-off came on 13 December, when General Jaruzelski declared martial law and ordered the arrest of most Solidarność leaders. His government proceeded to restore the six-day working week and to re-establish full control over society.

General Jaruzelski, an uncharismatic man whose image never recovered from his association with martial law, wavered through the 1980s between placating the Soviets and attempting to increase Poland's independence from Moscow. Once Gorbachev initiated perestroika, he was placed in the most intractable position of any leader in the Eastern Bloc, confronted by a society where the communist party was already left with little legitimacy and where the institutionalization of a civil society was well advanced. His attempts to foster dialogue with opposition intellectuals and representatives of the Church, such as the Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth (PRON) and the Consultative Council, necessarily failed since they excluded the vastly popular but now illegal Solidarność. At the same time, economic reform remained confined to a small sector and failed to address the fundamental need to integrate the Polish economy into a globalizing economy. In August 1988, Jaruzelski had no option but to enter into

negotiation with the Solidarność leader, Lech Walesa. The outcome was a promise by the government to organize quasi-free elections to the Polish Parliament in June 1989. The massive victory of Solidarność led to the creation of a non-communist government under Tadeusz Mazowiecki, with General Jaruzelski continuing in office for another year and a half until free elections for the presidency took place in December 1990.

The significance of the Polish case was not simply that 'Poland was first': indeed in many respects Poland was untypical, insofar as civil society played a far smaller role in bringing about the end of communism in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with the possible exception of Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless it serves as a lens through which the cycle of revolutions can be viewed.[12] Endemic low productivity, increased international indebtedness, the changing terms of trade in energy and raw materials were all factors at play in other communist states. Ruling communist parties feared to take the swingeing measures necessary to resolve the economic crisis for fear that this would trigger popular protest and possible military intervention by the Soviet Union. Gradually, as it became clear that such intervention was unlikely, the communist governments floundered, unable to find a way of effecting compromise with the civic opposition and increasingly split between a faction that favoured economic and political reform and compromise with the opposition, and hardliners whose prime concern was to maintain one-party rule and social order. In most countries, although civic opposition was much weaker than in Poland, it sought to copy the Solidarność strategy of avoiding a head-on collision with the security and military authorities while not letting up the pressure for democratic change. Finally, a factor that shaped all the revolutions was the rapprochement between the two superpowers which culminated on 2–3 December 1989 in the Malta Summit, when Gorbachev repudiated the 'threat of force, mistrust, psychological, and ideological struggle' while President George W. Bush spoke of transforming the East–West relationship into one of 'enduring cooperation'.

These factors help explain the largely peaceful character of the revolutions of 1989. Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic States, and, to some extent, Bulgaria all followed the non-violent path forged by Poland. On the way, of course, there were some violent incidents: as late as 7 October, the police attacked demonstrators in East Berlin. Nevertheless, the communist governments chose not to use force against the opposition. For its part, the opposition cleaved to non-violent protest. In a sense the peaceful character of the revolutions reflected the fact that both sides realized that the maintenance of the Eastern Bloc was no longer on the cards. Romania was an exception: there the revolution against Nicolae Ceaușescu turned into a bloody battle at the end of 1989. The regime seems to have been convinced that the military option could work even without Soviet backing. Some analysts suggest that elements in the elite encouraged violence as a means of getting rid of Ceaușescu and of reviving the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the people. Certainly the civic opposition was weak—its weakness rooted in economic privation and tight political control by the Securitate or secret police—and had little possibility to get its message across through the media.

Communism beyond Europe

In China in May–June 1989 protesters in Beijing and other major cities took to the streets to demand an end to official corruption and greater political freedom but this protest, although it upset the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), does not fit the schema of peaceful revolution or the narrative of the fall of communism, since on 4 June the movement was brutally suppressed by the People's Liberation Army. Nevertheless there were certain parallels with the events in Eastern and Central Europe. The involvement of the working class, alongside students, is a factor which is often overlooked and which makes the composition of the movement not so dissimilar from that of the movements in the Eastern Bloc. Moreover, as in the Eastern Bloc, economic grievances played a part in the protests—which is again often overlooked—the protesters keenly aware that living standards in China were far below those in the capitalist world. A generational divide, too, lay at the heart of the movement in China, with the protesters drawn disproportionately from a young generation that was plugged into global popular culture (see the rock bands that played to the hunger strikers on Tiananmen Square) and that demanded greater self-expression and individual freedom than their parents' generation had enjoyed. Finally, as in the Eastern Bloc, the protests precipitated a split in the ruling party. Hardliners saw the concessions regarding freedom of speech and ideas that were offered by Party Chairman Hu Yaobang and, following his isolation, by Zhao Ziyang as dangerous. Deng Xiaoping, the architect of the economic reforms, in the face of protests in more than 400 cities, sided with them, afraid that the country might slide back into the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. He rejected Zhao Ziyang's call for negotiation with the protesters, declared martial law on 20 May and allowed Prime Minister Li Peng to attack the students on hunger strike. That said, the differences between the Chinese and Eastern European movements remained substantial. Despite the erection of a 'Goddess of Democracy' statue, modelled on the Statue of Liberty, it is misleading to assume that the protesters were demanding the end of communist rule and the establishment of a democratic political system. Despite calls for greater civil liberties, their protests were driven as much by patriotism and anger at corruption and nepotism as by any aspiration for parliamentary democracy. Many indeed simply wanted the CCP to live up to the ideals it espoused. Again in contrast to the Polish movement, the students in Tiananmen tended to see themselves as privileged representatives of the nation, vested by the Confucian tradition with a moral responsibility of speaking truth to power, and they tended to look down on the more concrete demands and desires of workers, businesspeople, and farmers. This limited the political effectiveness of the movement, making it easier for the CCP to re-establish its authority by facilitating a rapid increase in living standards, which above all benefited a burgeoning middle class, and by the effective use of a nationalist rhetoric.[13]

In Cuba 1989 was also a troublesome year, the political excitement centring on the execution of 'Hero of the Revolution', Arnaldo T. Ochoa Sánchez, head of the Western Army, for treason. In contrast to China and Eastern and Central Europe, however, 1989 did not

bring a political challenge to communist rule. The authority of Fidel Castro, prime minister from 1959 to 1976 and president from 1976 to 2008, continued solid. Nevertheless the unravelling of the Soviet Union had a cataclysmic effect on the Cuban economy. From the early 1960s, faced by a crippling US trade embargo, Cuba had come to rely completely on the Soviet Union which bought its sugar at inflated prices and sold it oil at discounted prices. As a result of the break-up of the Soviet Union, imports fell by 75 per cent and Cuba's economy came close to collapse. Castro was forced to declare the so-called 'Special Period', which was at its worst in the early to mid-1990s, when desperate shortages of petroleum compelled the population to switch from automobiles and lorries to bicycles, carts, and tractors and forced a transition from farming based on chemical fertilizers to a more sustainable form of agriculture. The black market flourished, forcing the government to legalize small businesses and split up large state-run farms into small cooperatives. It was also forced to allow more foreign investment, creating joint ventures with foreign companies and legalizing the US dollar. These economic reforms were not as radical as those being pursued by Deng Xiaoping in China in the same decade, and they did not lead to the same rise in living standards that the Chinese people experienced, as their economy integrated into the world market. Nevertheless the painful transformation of an economy based on sugar and tobacco into one that was more diversified compelled Cuba gradually to integrate into wider economic and political networks in Latin America. In the course of the 1990s, however, Latin America became the continent where the backlash against the neo-liberal policies of the Washington consensus was strongest, with Cuba moving into the orbit of President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela.

In Central and Eastern Europe the generation that came to political power in the 1980s was very much influenced by the porousness of communism as an ideology and organization and former members of communist parties entered the post-revolutionary political class as a kind of 'new' Left. The post-communist governments moved rapidly towards the market and integration into the global economy, not without sometimes devastating setbacks. Economic liberalization was usually accompanied by an upsurge of nationalism, a response to emancipation from the imperial structures of the Soviet Union and an attempt to bridge the widening gap between the newly emerging economic elite and a working class that did not profit from rapid privatization and structural adjustment of the economy. National-liberals remained uncertain whether as a party of 'globalists' they would be attractive to the majority of voters. Former communists split into nostalgic defenders of the old regime and a new Left that presented itself as the defender of those who had lost position, status, and well-being in the process of transformation. This new Left supported the opening towards the European Union but has become more 'territorialist' in recent years. Yet national solutions to economic problems are no longer on the cards, and despite political rhetoric, most of the Eastern European states have embraced the possibility of integration into the European Union and into global economic networks.

Outside Europe, the attractiveness of the Soviet model, already waning in the 1980s, went into precipitous decline. In Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and other parts of Africa political regimes that had depended on Soviet military and economic support collapsed. In

East Asia, notably in China, Vietnam, and Laos, 1989 did not lead to the end of communist rule; but it did force these countries to integrate into regional and global networks such as ASEAN (the Association of South East Asian Nations) and, more recently, the World Trade Organization. The autarkic policies once pursued by communist states are a thing of the past, except in isolated regimes such as North Korea. The bipolar logic of the Cold War, ultimately rooted in the territorialization of political power, has gone. If it has not been replaced by a world order based on cooperation as envisioned by Bush and Gorbachev, it has nevertheless been replaced by looser, competing supranational networks none of which is ultimately shielded from the fateful logic of a single globalized economy. From that point of view, 1989 had implications for communist and non-communist countries alike.

Notes

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3. <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0900156.html> (accessed 15 January 2013).
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PART III

GLOBAL COMMUNISM

CHAPTER 10

THE COMINTERN

ALEXANDER VATLIN AND STEPHEN A. SMITH

The Evolution of the Comintern, 1919–1943

Alexander Vatlin (translated by Stephen A. Smith)

The Comintern was established by the First Congress of the Communist International which took place in Moscow from 2 to 6 March 1919. The Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) (RKP(b)), at that time the only mass communist party in existence and the only party that had seized state power, summoned the congress, and the organizational and political leadership of the Comintern was to remain in the hands of that party throughout its existence. In calling itself the Third International, the Comintern emphasized its continuity with the First International, created in 1864, in which Marx had played a key part, and the Second International, created in 1889, which had transformed labour movements into a factor in world politics. However, the Comintern leaders believed that the Second International had betrayed revolutionary socialism by failing to oppose the First World War and so a Third International was now necessary in order to realize the Marxist theory of the transition from capitalism to socialism.

Following the outbreak of the First World War, the overwhelming majority of European workers' parties had come out in support of their national governments, although a left-radical wing of internationalists had emerged in which the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party (RSDLP) was an active member. Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the RSDLP, put forward the slogan of transforming the imperialist war into a civil war as a means of bringing the working class to power. In the wake of the failure of the main parties to oppose the war, Rosa Luxemburg and the internationalists dismissed the Second International as a 'stinking corpse'. In February 1919, following the end of the war, the moderate socialist parties of the Second International met in Berne to revive links, and it was this that galvanized the Bolsheviks into convening a

new, Third, International. The platform adopted at the founding congress proclaimed that 'the epoch of the breakdown of capital, its internal disintegration, the epoch of the communist revolution of the proletariat' was at hand. In line with this perspective, it called on the working class to 'break the rule of capital, make wars impossible, abolish the frontiers between states, transform the whole world into a community where all work for the common good and realise the freedom and the brotherhood of peoples'.[1] The experience of the Bolsheviks in seizing power became the basis on which the strategy and tactics of the Comintern were formulated. The domestic and international contradictions of the capitalist system were to be utilized to bring about the complete destruction of the system and to prepare the working class to take power, if necessary through armed struggle. Significantly, the emphasis of this congress was, for the first and last time, on soviets rather than on the party. Lenin told the congress that the freedoms of parliamentary democracy were merely class freedoms, whereas soviets, the incarnation of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', put real power in the hands of the oppressed classes. Delegates were exhorted to explain to the broad mass of workers that bourgeois democracy must be replaced by a system of soviets in which communists must work to secure a majority.[2] While communists denied the innate value of parliamentarism and civic freedoms, they were nevertheless required to use legal means of struggle in the democratic countries of Europe—parliament, trade unions, and the press—in order to promote the class struggle. This perspective was in line not only with a radical interpretation of the Marxist theory of history, but also with the realities of the post-war crisis, in which political revolution was rapidly breaking out. Communist parties were being formed in most European countries and the labour movement was undergoing a process of radicalization, inspired by the Russian Revolution.

The real organization of the Comintern did not begin until the Second Congress which took place from 19 July to 17 August 1920. According to the constitution that was approved, the Comintern was to become the 'global party of the proletariat', based upon national sections. Its directing organ in the period between congresses was to be the Executive Committee (ECCI), to which the leading Bolshevik, G. I. Zinoviev, was elected chairman. Members of the RKP(b) dominated the ECCI and its organizational apparatus, although some delegates from foreign communist parties were summoned to Moscow to work for the new organization, where they resided in the building of the former Hotel Luxe on Tverskaia street. The headquarters of ECCI were located opposite the Kremlin in the first building on Mokhovaia street.

The Second Congress ratified the Twenty-One Conditions for Acceptance into the Communist International, which forbade the entry of 'opportunists and wavering elements' into national communist parties. The congress aimed to split the international labour movement by making a decisive break with social democratic parties. It urged the formation of a cadre of professional revolutionaries who would adopt methods of strict conspiracy and underground work, such as had been pioneered by the Bolsheviks in their struggle against tsarism, and would be subject to a regular process of 'cleansing' to ensure that their quality remained high. The ECCI reserved the right to exclude from its ranks groups or fractions that breached party discipline. It thus assumed the mantle

of 'general staff of the world revolution', issuing summonses and directives and sending emissaries with experience of underground struggle throughout the world. Significant resources from Russia's state reserves were used to support the setting-up of communist parties.

In summer 1920 there was huge hope that the Red Army's advance into Poland would see the coming to power of communists in countries outside Russia. However, the post-war crisis was beginning to pass in the majority of European countries, and the defeat of soviet republics in Hungary and Bavaria forced the Comintern to review tactics that had been devised to meet the 'revolutionary storm'. The transition to the New Economic Policy in Russia in 1921 also helped shape this review, since it highlighted the problem of how the soviet state and the international communist movement should survive in a hostile international environment. The appearance of pro-communist organizations in the colonies presented ECCI with further challenges.

By the time the Third Congress convened from 22 June to 12 July 1921, forty-eight communist parties were in existence. The previous year Lenin had spoken out against 'the infantile disease of left-wing communism' and he expanded this attack on ultra-leftist elements in the ranks of the European communist parties, principally the advocates of 'armed uprisings'. The most important of these had been the recent 'March Action' of 1921 organized by the communist party in Germany. This attack brought the communist movement close to the point of splitting, and only the authority and cohesiveness of the RKP(b) enabled the congress to forge a compromise. The resolutions passed by the congress recognized the 'ebbing of the revolutionary wave' in Europe and repudiated 'offensive tactics' in favour of an orientation to the masses. The first expression of the new political line was the adoption of the tactic of the 'united front', approved by the Politburo of the RKP(b) and then by ECCI in December 1921. This justified cooperation with different currents in the labour movement, above all, with social democrats in countries where they had a mass base. The idea was that through practical struggle, through organizing strikes and demonstration, each current would reveal its true colours. Convinced of the historic correctness of Marxist doctrine, Comintern leaders did not hide their hopes that, in the words of Zinoviev, the 'united workers' front will become the rope on which we shall hang the Social Democrats'. However, notwithstanding a number of partial successes and a conference of the three rival Internationals in Berlin from 2 to 5 April 1922, the new tactic failed to shift the balance of forces in the European socialist movement. Communists remained an exotic left wing, and their unconditional adherence to the Bolshevik experience led to their increasingly being seen as the 'hand of Moscow'. Nevertheless for a significant part of the working class and the left-wing intelligentsia, the 'Russian example' retained its attractiveness, and by 1922 the number of communists in the world, excluding Soviet Russia, had grown to about 1 million.

In countries where stable political regimes had not consolidated themselves, ECCI gave active support to communist parties seeking to prepare revolutionary insurgencies. Such actions were undertaken in 1923–4 in Germany, Bulgaria, and the Baltic States, yet all were crushed and communist parties were forced into illegality. A survey

of the reasons for the defeat of these actions caused the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, which met from 17 June to 8 July 1924, to recognize that the capitalist system had stabilized. This stabilization was seen as 'temporary and partial', but it forced communist parties to face up to more realistic tasks of raising 'transitional demands', strengthening trade-union and parliamentary work, carrying out anti-war work, and organizing solidarity campaigns with colonial peoples who were seen as the natural allies of the European proletariat in the struggle to transform the world along communist lines.

The Fifth Congress laid down that future revolutions would follow the Russian path and that they could be successful only by copying the experience of the RKP(b). The slogan of 'Bolshevization', raised by the congress, remained central to the ideological arsenal of the Comintern down to its dissolution in 1943. This was understood to entail the building of party organizations on the basis of workplace cells rather than geographical areas, and the establishment within communist parties of strict hierarchies of command with strict obedience to the directives of the centre. A schematic interpretation of 'Marxism-Leninism' tied the hands of foreign communists, just as it did their Russian comrades, allowing no space for creative analysis or theoretical initiative. All this prevented communist parties working out an independent political course that responded to the concrete conditions in their respective countries and this led to periodic 'opportunist deviations and wavering' in inner-party ranks. National communist parties were strictly subordinated to ECCI—for example, the organization department of ECCI sent instructors to the congresses of national parties to ensure that directives were carried out—and this fostered bureaucratism ('rule of the apparat') and a constant turnover of cadres ('cleansing of party ranks').

Through the 1920s, the leading organs of the Comintern failed to distinguish the state interests of the Soviet Union from the needs of national parties. This caused the latter to become politically isolated and to lose support from voters and from their own mass base. The biggest communist party in Asia—the Chinese Communist Party—took an increasingly left turn in the course of the national revolution of 1926–7, which led in spring 1927 to the repression of thousands of Communists by its ally, the Guomindang.

Strains in relations between ECCI and its national sections were aggravated by the inner-party conflict in the RKP(b), which erupted after Lenin retired from active political work in 1923. The defeat of the 'German October' in autumn of that year was one of the first manifestations of this conflict, and all Comintern leaders were drawn into it. Its ideological focus concerned the possibility of building socialism in a single country. The Stalin–Bukharin fraction gave an unqualified positive answer to this question, the implication of which was that proletarian revolution in the rest of the world should be postponed until the Soviet Union was stronger. Their opponents, Trotsky and Zinoviev, insisted that the stabilization of capitalism in Europe and the USA was only temporary and that the USSR could not survive in the long term as an isolated state in a capitalist world. Even before Zinoviev was removed from his position as chairman of ECCI in November 1926—so that his 'factional activity' could be monitored—a permanent delegation of the RKP(b) was installed within ECCI. Constitutionally, this had no status as an organ of the Comintern, yet it became the centre where decisions concerning

cadres, finance, and politics were made, decisions that were binding on foreign communist parties. In addition, the leading organs of the Comintern were modelled on those of the Stalinized RKP(b). For more than three years, no Comintern congress took place: instead enlarged plenums of the ECCI were summoned that co-opted new members to replace excluded oppositionists. The presidium of ECCI—after 1927, its political secretariat—became a permanent executive organ. Following the removal of Zinoviev, a collective leadership of ECCI was put in place, but N. I. Bukharin was in charge of day-to-day work and subject to the orders of the Politburo.

Bukharin was the principal author of the programme of the Comintern passed by the Sixth Congress, which met from 17 July to 1 September 1928. This programme depicted the Soviet Union as 'the fatherland of toilers throughout the world'. The congress insisted that the phase of capitalist stabilization was now over and that the world was entering its 'third period' of development since the First World War. Significantly, the programme failed to offer a sober evaluation of the danger of fascism in Europe. The new political line was distinguished by an absolute refusal to cooperate with socialists—the tactic of 'class against class'—and by an orientation towards splitting the trade-union movement in order to form a 'red trade-union opposition'. As a result, national parties were unable to utilize fully the favourable opportunities for 'winning the masses' that opened up with the onset of the world economic crisis in autumn 1929. Despite its anti-fascist propaganda, the Comintern forbade cooperation with other left forces in the struggle against Fascist Italy and, from 1933, Nazi Germany. In line with Stalin's own view, social democracy in Europe was classed as 'social fascism', and the coming to power of fascist movements was hailed as proof that capitalism had reached a terminal crisis.

The Stalinist regime of autocratic rule in the Comintern was manifest in rigid ideological diktats that emanated from on high, in the predetermination by the centre of all political and personnel issues, and in the absence of any mechanism whereby national parties could feed back views to Moscow. Stalin avoided directing the Comintern personally, relying instead on V. M. Molotov, I. A. Piatnitskii, and V. G. Knorin to translate his instructions into practice. Parallel with the rout of the Right Opposition in the RKP(b) of Bukharin, Alexei Rykov, and Mikhail Tomsky at the end of the 1920s, an anti-rightist campaign was launched in a number of communist parties operating in legal conditions, notably in Germany, Czechoslovakia, and the USA. 'Right-wing' leaders were blamed for overestimating the strength of the class enemy, for 'capitulationism', and for being reluctant to build their parties in accordance with the Bolshevik model. This mode of operation led to permanent crisis in national parties, and to the appearance of new oppositions that rejected the Comintern's effort to impose 'Bolshevization' by force.

The Stalinization of the Comintern was further reflected in the restructuring of its central apparatus. Operational work was concentrated in 'Länder secretariats', responsible for whole regions, and in commissions made up of members of the Presidium that were responsible for different aspects of Comintern work. The cadre department of ECCI, created in 1932, had the task of monitoring the quality of leading officials in the central apparatus and in national parties. It had direct links to the Soviet security organs

and was the lynchpin of the system of control over foreign communists working in the USSR. The international liaison department, which was responsible for conspiratorial liaison between Moscow and the national parties, enjoyed a certain autonomy within the Comintern. It commanded a network of 'communication stations' across the globe, along with a significant staff of couriers and instructors, many of whom, such as Richard Sorge, worked in parallel for Soviet intelligence.

The establishment of Hitler's dictatorship in Germany in 1933 and the cruel repression of communists that followed, combined with the mass support that the Nazis had managed to win within the space of a few months, caused the Comintern gradually to distance itself from sectarian and leftist positions. From the first, in spite of Moscow's directives, some national parties cooperated with other parties in the struggle against fascism, and soon the struggle against fascism became the priority of the international movement. In bringing about this shift, the trial of Georgi Dimitrov, head of the western European bureau of ECCI, was of critical importance. He was accused by the Nazis of provoking the arson attack on the Reichstag on 27 February 1933, but an international campaign of solidarity led to the release of Dimitrov and his co-defendants. This served to demonstrate the potential of the anti-fascist movement, and in 1934 in France, Italy, and Spain agreements were concluded between communists and socialists for a united struggle. Dimitrov, who had received Soviet citizenship and been elected to the political commission of the political secretariat of ECCI on 29 April 1934, persuaded Stalin of the need to change strategy. The adoption of the 'popular anti-fascist front' signalled the renunciation of the policy of exposing social democrats as the principal enemy of the communists and the reunification of revolutionary and reformist trade unions in defence of political freedoms and parliamentary democracy.

The new tactic buttressed the efforts by the Soviet government to construct a system of 'collective security' to oppose the aggressive designs of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The Seventh Congress of the Comintern, which met from 25 July to 20 August 1935, reinforced the popular front tactic while maintaining a dogmatic characterization of fascism as the 'open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital'. Along with the consolidation of a political axis of antifascist forces, the congress also called for work inside mass fascist organizations with a view to undermining them 'from within' (a Trojan horse tactic). Georgii Dimitrov was made general secretary of ECCI and opponents of the new tactic, such as Piatnitskii, Knorin, and Béla Kun, were removed from the leadership.

The chief practical expression of the new policy was the formation of a Popular Front government in France in June 1936, supported by the communists. In Spain a military uprising against the left-wing Republican government led to civil war from 1936 to 1939. The Comintern was very active in helping the Republican forces in Spain, and brigades of internationalist volunteers were organized by national communist parties. In China on 24 December 1936 the Communists and the Guomindang formed a new united front to combat the Japanese who invaded in July 1937. In the second half of the 1930s a certain communist advance came about because national parties were given some freedom of manoeuvre to determine the national form of the popular front. The ECCI abstained

from operational control over the leadership of national parties, and in any case it was unable to impose it in countries under occupation.

At the same time, the authority of the international communist movement was dealt a serious blow when the Soviet government launched mass repression in the second half of the 1930s. Comintern leaders, leaders of national sections, and political émigrés from countries under authoritarian rule fell victim to trumped-up charges of espionage, sabotage, or wrecking. In the central apparatus of ECCI about a hundred people were repressed, mainly those who had worked in the international liaison department (known from 1935 as the liaison service of the Comintern). In 1937 the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, invented a mass 'anti-Comintern plot' supposedly headed by Piatnitskii and Béla Kun. In August 1938 the ECCI ordered the disbandment of the Communist Party of Poland on the grounds that it was packed with spies; its leaders were summoned to Moscow and shot. The leading organs of the Comintern expressed full support for the verdicts of the show trials in which Bolshevik leaders were eliminated. Stalin personally edited the documents of ECCI, demanding that they intensify the charge that Trotskyists were advocating 'a policy of preparing for the defeat of the Soviet Union'. World public opinion did not accept these absurd charges, but communist parties abroad were forced to justify them.

Even greater than the damage done by mass repression was that which ensued in the first stage of the Second World War, as the international communist movement followed the slipstream of Soviet foreign policy. On 22 August 1939, just a day before the Non-Aggression Pact was signed between the USSR and Germany, the secretariat of ECCI called on communist parties to 'carry out the struggle against the aggressors ever more energetically, especially against German fascism'. Following the outbreak of war, however, communist parties were instructed to carry out pacifist propaganda and to make no distinction between the Hitler regime and its opponents. This volte-face was linked to Stalin's view, set out in a conversation with Dimitrov on 7 September 1939, that the 'division of capitalist countries into fascist and democratic has lost all sense'. As a result, the Comintern leadership removed the slogan of the popular front from its masthead and for almost two years the call for a struggle against fascism disappeared. This defeatist posture placed communist parties in some western European countries that were at war with Nazi Germany on the edge of illegality. In France the party was banned in September 1939.

The subordination of Comintern tactics to the changing requirements of Soviet foreign policy was revealed most sharply in 1939 to 1941 and it intensified the isolation of communist parties in their national political arenas. Thousands of activists and operatives quit the ranks of the movement, refusing to accept that the Second World War was an imperialist war and that both sides were equally in the wrong. At the same time, it did nothing to minimize the repression of communists in countries under fascist rule, merely causing these parties to lose their ideological bearings. The outbreak of war complicated relations between ECCI and its national sections by making it difficult to send printed literature and political emissaries from Moscow, so the basic—and extremely unreliable—method of communication became the coded radio telegram. A number of

communist parties worked out new forms of underground struggle that largely corresponded to the realities of war rather than to the 'pacifism' called for by ECCI.

After Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, the political line changed once more. Communists resumed the policy of a popular united front against fascist aggression and took an active part in the resistance movement in their respective countries. ECCI was evacuated to Ufa and there concentrated on anti-fascist propaganda in countries occupied by the Nazis and on coordinating the activities of underground groups and partisan detachments led by communists. In addition to contact by radio, experienced functionaries were smuggled into countries under the Axis powers to revive party organizations that had been smashed by the police, and agents were sent to carry out intelligence and sabotage work.

On 15 May 1943, the presidium of ECCI announced the impending dissolution of the Comintern. The communiqué to communist parties explained that the 'organizational form of the Comintern' no longer corresponded to the pressing tasks of the political struggle and fettered the 'independence of its sections'. At almost every Comintern congress delegates had spoken of the need to increase the independence of national parties, only to see the apparat impose ever more rigid control on their political and organizational work. On 8 May, according to Dimitrov's diary, he and Manuil'skii were summoned by Molotov and told that the organization they headed must be dissolved. A few days later, the draft document authorizing this received Stalin's approval. At the root of the decision to dissolve the Comintern lay the calculation that a decisive breakthrough in the course of the war would require the Soviet Union to strengthen its position in the anti-Nazi coalition, especially with regard to the reorganization of the political landscape of Europe once the war was over. To this end, he decided it was time to bury the idea that the 'hand of Moscow' controlled all communist parties. In an interview on 28 May 1943, he declared that closing the Comintern would facilitate the 'union of all peace-loving peoples into a single international camp for the struggle against the threat of world domination by Hitlerism'.

The dissolution of the Comintern did not lead to a fundamental reconstruction of 'centre–periphery relations' in the international communist movement. The greater part of the ECCI apparatus headed by Dimitrov was transferred to the international department of the Central Committee of the RKP(b) and a number of its sub-departments responsible for technical conspiracy and propaganda abroad were renamed 'scientific research institutes'. Their work continued and became even more secretive. In the final stage of the war, the successor structures of the Comintern stepped up activity to prepare cadres to head post-war better reconstruction in the countries of eastern and central Europe following their liberation by the Red Army.

The creation and activity of the Communist International was a crucial element in the project to transform the world along communist lines that emerged out of the revolutionary crisis caused by the First World War. In the event society developed along different lines from those predicted, yet the contribution of communists to the dramatic history of the twentieth century is indisputable.

Issues in Comintern Historiography

S. A. Smith

The release in the early 1990s of 20 million pages of Comintern records by what is now the Russian State Archive of Social-Political History (RGASPI) in Moscow made possible a truly global history of the communist movement along with much fuller histories of the eighty or so national communist parties that came into existence during the Comintern's existence.[3] In the last fifteen years, this archive has been used to produce some impressive collections of documents that cover the relations of the Comintern to different national and regional communist parties, the collections relating to Asian communist parties being particularly outstanding.[4] The huge increase in documentation has clarified many issues. We know far more, for example, about the structures and functioning of the Comintern, about the ways it imposed its will—not always successfully—on 'national sections', on how it trained cadres and on how it cooperated with the intelligence and security organs of the Soviet state. But the huge access of documentation has not necessarily resolved issues in the historiography of the Comintern that have been contentious since the 1950s. What follows is a brief survey of some of these issues with some indication of how new documentation has influenced our understanding.

The first issue concerns our deeper appreciation of the extent to which the Politburo of the RKP(b)—and the permanent delegation of the RKP(b) within ECCI—determined the political strategy of the Comintern. Overlap of membership between the two bodies was extensive (after 1935 three Central Committee secretaries, Stalin, Zhdanov, and Ezhov, sat on ECCI) and whenever there was disagreement, ECCI leaders acceded to the wishes of the Politburo. In the case of the General Strike in Britain in 1926, for instance, Zinoviev, chair of ECCI, was consistently overruled. This did not mean that the ECCI had no sphere of influence. Its task was to refine and oversee the practical implementation of policy, and this included working out detail, dealing with national specificity and unforeseen contingency. In so doing, it would consult with leaders of national sections, sometimes closely. In the early years, in particular, ECCI cooperated on a fairly equal basis with national leaders—notably in Germany from 1919 to 1923. As the Comintern became more Stalinized, consultation with national leaders played a decreasing role in policy-making at the apex of the bureaucratic hierarchy, with leaders increasingly forced to wait for instructions from Moscow. Even in the 1930s, however, national leaders still had limited scope for agency, primarily in adapting the general line to local circumstances. It bears repeating that no party could ignore the general line laid down by the Politburo: in 1934, ECCI intervened to remove Jacques Doriot from the French party because of his premature call for an anti-fascist coalition with the socialist party; and in September 1939, Harry Pollitt of the British party was removed as general secretary for opposing the Hitler–Stalin pact. Nevertheless in practice ECCI was not able to monitor implementation of policy in detail—say, with respect to the

trade-union movement in a particular country. And sometimes national parties might quietly choose not to toe the Moscow line: from 1932, for example, the French party sidled away from a sectarian policy of 'social fascism', and in many countries the orientation towards anti-fascist popular fronts crystallized on the ground before Moscow approved the policy in 1935.

Secondly, if new documentation demonstrates the dominance of the Politburo, it does not follow that the Comintern was simply a tool of Soviet foreign policy. This was certainly a trend, as Alexander Vatlin shows, especially in Europe and the USA: we now know, for example, how closely Comintern operatives worked with Soviet diplomats. Nevertheless if one looks at the global picture, it is clear that the Comintern continued to promote revolution, especially in the colonial and semi-developed world, according to its own lights. And this did not always accord with the priorities of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, whose concerns were very much centred on Europe. This can be seen in the early 1930s, for instance, when Maxim Litvinov's efforts to win Britain and France to a policy of collective security against Hitler was not helped by the Comintern's denunciation of 'social fascists'.

Thirdly, new documentation makes clear that there was far more conflict over policy within ECCI—even into the 1930s—than was once assumed. ECCI, for example, was working in the dark when it came to crafting policy for national liberation in economically backward, colonial, and semi-colonial countries. In the case of China, there were deep divisions between Grigorii Voitinskii and Mikhail Borodin on a range of issues that included the united front between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the respective roles of the proletariat, national bourgeoisie, and petite bourgeoisie in the national liberation struggle, and the social character of the national revolution. In consequence, ECCI policy was generally the outcome of compromise, often marked by a calculated ambiguity that Harold Isaacs once likened to 'double-entry book-keeping'. This enabled ECCI to claim credit for or repudiate policy according to the results of its implementation on the ground. Incidentally, disputes within ECCI did not neatly mirror the conflict taking place within the Russian Communist Party between supporters of Stalin and Trotsky. The policy of the united front, which was imposed on a reluctant CCP in 1923, was not attacked by Trotsky until 1927. Moreover, as Alexander Pantsov has shown, Stalin, far from reining in social revolution in order to maintain the alliance with the Guomindang, as Trotsky maintained, actually sought to promote it by encouraging the Left to seize power within its leading organs. This placed the CCP leadership in a hopeless dilemma as it struggled to communize the Guomindang while maintaining the united front at all costs.[5]

These issues open up the much bigger question of the nature of ECCI's relationship to 'national sections'. First, in the light of the new documentation, it is clear that communist parties would not have emerged in many countries without the intervention of the Comintern. In the 1970s growing interest in social-historical approaches to political movements encouraged a tendency to see communist movements as coming into existence 'from below', as a result of the crisis in the socialist and labour movements caused by the First World War. In China, for example, historians showed how the May Fourth

Movement of 1919—a movement of students, workers, and merchants to protest against the Versailles peacemakers' decision to transfer German privileges in China to Japan—strengthened the orientation of radical youth to the working class and to anarchism and Marxism. However, in the light of Comintern documentation, it seems implausible to assume that these young radicals would have left their study groups and made contact with workers and founded a communist party without the crucial intervention of Voitinskii in April 1920 and, especially, of Hendricus Sneevliet in June 1921. New documentation underwrites the sense that the strategic vision, organizational and military expertise, and financial support of the Comintern were vital to the creation of communist parties everywhere, although less so in a country such as Germany, which had a well-developed tradition of revolutionary socialism. Second, the extent to which ECCI determined the development of national parties varied: few parties suffered the ravages inflicted on the Polish, Belorussian, and western Ukrainian parties at the height of the purges. At the other extreme, only a handful of parties were considered to be so insignificant as to be left to their idiosyncratic devices. In Costa Rica, Rafael Calderón, elected president in 1940 as the candidate of the Right, pursued social reform and support of the Allies and thereby alienated the coffee oligarchy, middle classes, and the Church. He thus turned to the communists and the socially progressive archbishop of San José for support. When a brief civil war broke out in 1948, following a highly disputed election, communist militias provided him with armed backing, while Anastasio Somoza, dictator of Nicaragua, gave him his political blessing.

Ironically, Comintern intervention was just as likely to divide as to unite communist parties. Nguyễn Ái Quốc (Hồ Chí Minh), a founding member of the French Communist Party, believed that socialism was indissoluble from the liberation of Indochina from French colonial rule. In the mid-1920s he was something of a paragon for ECCI, making a brilliant speech to the Fifth Congress in July 1924, in which he accused the French and British communist parties of failing to give support to the peoples of the French and British colonies, especially in Africa. In 1925 he set up the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League, the first Indochinese communist organization, in Guangzhou with CCP support. With the shift to 'class against class', members of the League in Tonkin set out to 'proletarianize' the party, and this led to the arrest of many activists in central and southern Vietnam. The Central Committee, however, together with the Annam regional committee, was unhappy at this radical turn. In 1930, Hồ effected an uneasy rapprochement between what had become two separate parties, but he did not endear himself to ECCI, which accused him of failing to impose a clear 'class line'. By the time he enrolled at the Lenin School in October 1934, he no longer held a leadership position in the Indochinese Communist Party (the Comintern had forbidden the creation of a separate Vietnamese party). Holed up in Moscow for four years, he was suspected of 'nationalist errors' and breaches of security, and probably survived only because Indochina was not a priority for Soviet leaders. Surprisingly, the shift away from the policies of the 'third period' did not improve his standing: it merely reopened splits inside the party, with first Trần Phú and then Hà Huy Tập, both trained in Moscow, condemning Hồ for capitulating to bourgeois nationalism. Despite the Comintern's return to a policy that prioritized national

liberation over social revolution, Hồ only slowly regained influence. It was mainly his success from 1941 in building the Việt Minh, which was committed to organizing all Vietnamese 'whether workers, peasants, rich peasants, landlords, or native bourgeoisie' to liberate their country from Japanese military occupation and French colonial rule, that sealed his dominance.[6] As this suggests, ECCI may have been the ultimate arbiter of internal quarrels, yet its policies could be deeply divisive within national parties.

There were many very practical reasons why Moscow was unable to exercise the kind of close supervision of fraternal parties it would have liked, especially outside Europe. Telegrams were intercepted by foreign intelligence services, directives were often out of date by the time they arrived, police repression and subversion by agents provocateurs decimated leaderships that ECCI had carefully nurtured. In some cases, national parties simply grew too powerful. In the CCP the Comintern continued to exercise influence into the early 1930s, but after 1935 Mao Zedong asserted greater independence, a development facilitated by a two-year loss of radio contact with the Soviet Union. By the time he became party leader in summer 1938, he felt independent enough, in his own words, 'not to listen completely' to Moscow: he thus resisted pressure to cooperate more forcefully with the Guomindang during the war against Japan.

ECCI, of course, had various means to enforce compliance on the part of 'national sections'. It monitored the implementation of policy closely, demanding to see the minutes of national and sometimes local committees, to vet conference documents in advance, and to keep a general eye on the content of party publications and propaganda. Crucially, it could withhold finance from unreliable national sections. Again, new documentation provides information about the extent to which parties relied on 'Moscow gold'. The British party was rather lavishly funded—a sum of £55,000 was made available to help set it up—but funding tailed off by the late 1930s, whereas in the USA the party was funded generously over a long period. More commonly, parties complained about the inadequacy of subventions from ECCI's budget commission.[7] In 1922 the Danish party requested 210,000 crowns but received only 18,750 crowns.[8] In June 1926 Voitinskii reported that the CCP's monthly budget of 6,000 roubles was grossly inadequate and asked that it be raised to 14,000. Additionally, the CCP appears to have received 3,000 roubles a month from the Soviet ambassador in Beijing. These sums were used primarily to fund party newspapers and to pay the salaries of full-time organizers. The new documentation proves that the scale of Comintern funding en bloc was large, yet the significance of this continues to be debated. The level of financial subvention certainly did not equate with level of political control, as the endemic factionalism in the US party shows. Some parties would certainly have collapsed without 'Moscow gold'; but in most cases it more probably intensified bureaucratization and made party leaders, whose salaries depended on Moscow, reluctant to challenge their paymaster.

ECCI invested considerable resources in organizing political and military training for young men picked out for high office by their respective parties. These were sent to 'special schools' in the Soviet Union for military training or, more commonly, to 'universities' in Moscow where they were educated in Marxism-Leninism, purged of ideological defects and petit-bourgeois habits, and inculcated with strict discipline

and unwavering commitment to the Soviet Union. The Communist University for the Toilers of the East, placed under the Comintern in 1923, trained activists mainly from China, India, Indonesia, and Korea, but several dozen Africans and Arabs also passed through its ranks. The Africans included Albert Nzula, secretary of the Communist Party of South Africa, Jomo Kenyatta, first president of Kenya, and George Padmore, leading pan-Africanist theorist and adviser to President Nkrumah of Ghana. Around 3,000 people, mainly from Europe and North America, graduated from the International Lenin School (ILS) between 1926 and 1938, including Josip Tito, Władysław Gomułka, and Erich Honecker. From 1929, the University of National Minorities of the West admitted activists from communist parties in central Europe, the Balkans, Scandinavia, and Italy. The culture of all these schools was one of strictest conspiracy: passports were handed in, pseudonyms used, photographs banned, and students were not informed when they would be sent home. Living conditions and food were poor, communication with the outside world hemmed in with restrictions, yet many remembered their time in the Soviet Union as a life-changing and rather positive experience.

The Comintern was keen to see workers dominate the leadership of its national sections and so opportunities to train in Moscow were given mainly to young working-class males. The proletarian credentials of the British contingent to the ILS were second to none, 91 per cent of students between 1929 and 1934 being workers, with miners and engineers counting for around a quarter.[9] The efforts by the ILS to ensure that a fifth of its intake was female, by contrast, were a dismal failure. This reflected the derisory proportion of women in the membership of the major national sections. In the French party the proportion of women rose from 1 to 7 per cent between 1926 and 1937; in the Swiss party the proportion was just under 10 per cent in 1933; in the Chinese party it was about the same in December 1926.[10] Giorgio Gaber, the Italian singer-actor, captures this in his song 'Qualcuno era comunista': 'One was a communist because of one's granddad, uncle, dad . . . but not one's mum'. The number of women who rose to positions of influence in the national sections can almost be counted on one hand: Alexandra Kollontai in the RKP(b), Dolores Ibárruri in the Spanish party, Ana Pauker in the Romanian party, plus a few others.

In March 1935, Dimitrov told ECCI that communists 'have to reeducate themselves in order to subordinate their personal life, all personal ties and actions, to the interests of the party. The party is everything to us—this is our slogan.'[11] Writing autobiographies, together with self-criticism and confession, were practices designed to promote this personal transformation and to enable Moscow to know its subordinates intimately. The cadre department of the Comintern maintained files on those sent for training, as did national sections. In 1939 the French party required people to answer no fewer than seventy-eight questions when writing their autobiographies. Militants tended to narrate their lives as a series of struggles, subsuming the personal into the political. Their biographies have begun to be used by historians to analyse the social profiles and motivations of party activists, and to explore how communist discursive practices shaped individual identity.[12]

The recent turn to global history opens up interesting perspectives for research on what was the most ambitious attempt to create a world organization since the expansion of the Roman Catholic Church from the sixteenth century. The Comintern drew together people of innumerable nationalities, and vastly different cultures, social backgrounds, and political experiences, all of whom shared a common commitment to building a better world. Much of this diversity was hidden behind the Comintern's homogeneous discourse and the facade of rigid discipline. Nevertheless communication among members of this multinational body cannot have been easy.. German was the working language of the Comintern until the 1930s when it was mainly replaced by Russian, yet neither language was known by most of the foreign leaders who sat on its commissions. Translation facilities were good for the time: four languages were used in the early congresses—English, French, German, and Russian, soon expanded to include Spanish—and by the time of the Seventh Congress, languages such as Arabic could also be accommodated. Nevertheless the problems of communicating with working-class activists with low levels of formal education via a foreign language must have been enormous.

Problems of translation were as much cultural as linguistic, although Comintern leaders seem to have paid little attention to them. A key text such as Lenin's *State and Revolution* bore the original title *Gosudarstvo i revoliutsiia*. The term *gosudarstvo* had originally denoted the dignity of the divinely appointed sovereign and later came to denote the tsar's personal domain. By the nineteenth century the term had come to carry the modern sense of the state as the political organization of a territory, yet the term continued to resonate with the idea of the state as the property of the sovereign. How attuned to this Stalin was we shall never know. The title chosen for the Chinese translation of Lenin's text was *Guojia yu geming*, and the two key terms were likewise saturated with historical meaning. The word *geming*, 'revolution', had for centuries denoted the withdrawal of the heavenly mandate from the emperor, while *guojia* was a neologism taken from Japanese, which linked the characters for 'kingdom' (*guo*) and 'family' (*jia*), to denote the territorially bounded state of the Chinese people. From the early years of the twentieth century, *guojia* quickly came to denote the 'nation-state', though it continued to resonate with its earlier connotations, suggesting that the polity was the direct, vertical extension of the family. A Chinese person with knowledge of English might well have translated *Guojia yu geming* as 'Nation-State and Revolution', a sense that is altogether missing from the original Russian title. Moreover, the ambiguities of the term *guojia* helped situate Chinese Marxist thinking about the state in the discursive context of nationalism. Leaving aside the much bigger question of the appropriateness of the Comintern's application of Marxist-Leninist concepts to non-Western societies, the key point is that concepts that originated in the West did not pass untransformed through the barrier of language. Their meaning was reconfigured in the new context into which they were transplanted. Future research on the global character of the Comintern may engage with current interest in cultural transfer and transnational flows the better to understand the process by which roughly shared understandings of concepts and norms were built across gulfs of culture and political context.

Notes

1. <http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/1st-congress/platform.htm>.
2. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/mar/comintern.htm#s3>.
3. There is a searchable database of the Comintern archive (<http://www.comintern-online.com>) accessible from a workstation at an institution that was part of the International Computerization of the Comintern Archive project (Incomka). RGASPI has a project to put the complete holdings online on a subscription basis, but it is by no means complete. The proceedings of the early congresses have been scrupulously edited by John Riddell: *Founding the Communist International: Proceedings and Documents of the First Congress, March 1919* (New York: Pathfinder, 1987); *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite! Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress of the Communist International, 1920* (vols. i and ii) (New York: Pathfinder, 1991); *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920. First Congress of the Peoples of the East* (New York: Pathfinder, 1993); *Toward the United Front: Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International 1922* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
4. There are five volumes on China: *VKP(b), Komintern i natsional'noe dvizhenie v Kitae 1920–1925*, vol. i (Moscow: Buklet, 1994); *VKP(b), Komintern i natsional'noe dvizhenie v Kitae: 1926–1927*, vol. ii, 2 parts (Moscow: Buklet, 1996); *VKP(b), Komintern i sovetskoe dvizhenie v Kitae 1927–1931*, vol. iii, 2 parts (Moscow: Buket, 1999); *VKP(b), Komintern i sovetskoe dvizhenie v Kitae, 1931–1937*, vol. iv, 2 parts (Moscow: Rosspen, 2003); *VKP(b), Komintern i KPK v period antiiaponskoi voiny, 1937–Mai 1943*, vol. v (Moscow: Rosspen, 2007). There are also volumes of documents on the Comintern's relations with Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and India: *VKP(b), Komintern i Koreia, 1918–1941* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2007); *VKP(b), Komintern i Iaponiia, 1917–1941* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001); K. M. Tertitskii and A. E. Belogurova, *Taiwan gongchanzhuyi yundong, 1924–1934* (Taiwan: Academia Sinica, 2010); Purabi Roy et al. (eds.), *Indo-Russian Relations 1917–1947: Select Documents from the Archives of the Russian Federation*, 2 vols. (Kolkata: The Asiatic Society, 1999–2000).
5. Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919–1927* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000).
6. William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh* (New York: Hyperion, 2000); Sophie Quinn-Judge, *Ho Chi Minh: The Missing Years* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).
7. Andrew Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920–1943* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 44; Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, F. I. Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 22–5.
8. <http://www.whatnextjournal.co.uk/pages/history/DKP.html>.
9. Gidon Cohen and Kevin Morgan, 'Stalin's Sausage Machine: British Students at the Lenin School, 1926–1937', *Twentieth Century British History*, 13/4 (2002), 337.
10. Brigitte Studer, *Un parti sous influence. Le Parti communiste suisse, une section du Komintern, 1931–1939* (Lausanne: l'Age d'Homme, 1994), 325.
11. William Chase, *Enemies Within the Gates? The Comintern and Stalinist Repression, 1934–1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 98.
12. Researchers at Manchester University compiled a Biographical Database of more than 4,300 members of the Communist Party of Great Britain and the *Dictionnaire biographique de l'Internationale communiste en France, en Belgique, au Luxembourg, en Suisse et à*

Moscou (1919–1943) offers detailed biographies of 800 militants. It is available on CD rom as an appendix to Wolikow, *L'Internationale communiste (1919–1943). Le Komintern ou le rêve déchu du parti mondial de la révolution* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Atelier, 2010).

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CHAPTER 11

COMMUNISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

PAVEL KOLÁŘ

Hardly any other region embodies 'communism' in global memory to the same extent as Eastern Europe, that large area between Germany and Italy on one side and Russia and Turkey on the other. It was here, in Germany above all, that the idea of communism took root in the early twentieth century. Later, communists here stood at the forefront of the anti-fascist struggle; and following a terrible war, it was between the Elbe and Dnepr that Stalinist rule became established, followed from the mid-1950s by 'actually existing socialism'. Finally, it was in Europe's East that the world witnessed in 1989 the spectacular collapse of communism, both in its 'velvet' and not so 'velvet' forms. The televised execution of Elena and Nicolae Ceauşescu sealed the era of communism, but that act appeared to confirm a dominant narrative that cast Eastern Europe as the 'backward' and 'inferior' counterpart to a progressive and civilized Western part of the continent, a narrative that can be traced back to the Enlightenment.[1] The rise of communist rule in the late 1940s not only confirmed this image of Europe's East, but enlarged its area of applicability. Regions that had once been associated with the West, such as Saxony, Bohemia, and Silesia, were now seen as belonging to the East and thus as 'backward'. This cognitive reconfiguration wiped out the concept of 'Central Europe' from political vocabulary, restricting its usage to meteorology, a phenomenon Milan Kundera famously described as the 'Stolen West'. After 1989, Eastern Europeans proclaimed their 'return to Europe', some insisting they had never left it. Yet the dichotomizing narrative of 'backwardness' and 'progress' continues to shape the European historical and geographical imagination. Today's 'Two-Speed Europe' and 'New and Old Europe' are its latest formulation. Given this ideologized narrative—in which Eastern Europe is always found wanting in relation to an idealized 'West'—we must look to a higher level of historical abstraction if we are to understand the distinctiveness of Eastern Europe, as well as its formative interactions with the rest of Europe. I will merely pinpoint four major aspects.

First, for most of the modern era the region was an object of great power politics. Situated in the boundary zone between the Austro-Hungarian, German, Russian, and Ottoman empires, Eastern Europe was a playground of imperial struggle from the early modern period onwards. This culminated in the late 1930s and early 1940s when it became a 'battlefield of dictators' (Dietrich Beyrau) or 'Bloodlands' (Timothy Snyder).[2] Changes of borders, the devastation caused by war, genocide, and forced migration were the consequences of this imperial politics. After the Second World War, some of the imperialist principles, especially the notion of national-ethnic purity, were taken over by the revived nation-states and played an essential role in the establishment of communist regimes. Secondly, even if we dismiss Hans Kohn's dichotomy of Western 'civic' and Eastern 'ethnic' nationalisms, it is obvious that imperial rule over small national communities generated a peculiar form of nation-building. Miroslav Hroch's distinction between state nations, such as France, and 'small nations' that emerged out of non-dominant ethnic groups captures more accurately a situation in which efforts at national emancipation were directed against dominant nations to the point where they caused the break-up of empires. This fundamental conflict between national emancipation and imperial aspirations remained present in Eastern Europe after 1945. Whenever a small nation-state took an independent political stand, as was the case with Yugoslavia in 1948, Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968, conflict with a great power followed. Thirdly, the lack of industrialization and the dominance of agriculture shaped the development of Eastern European societies deep into the twentieth century. However much it was an ideological construct, the idea of 'backwardness' and the consequent urge to 'catch up' with the West were powerful driving forces behind the construction of socialism. And since social inequality was greater than in most other parts of Europe, the call for social justice fell on fruitful soil. Indeed, the wide economic cleavages and deep-rooted social hierarchies proved ideal soil for a radical politics from below. Finally, while recognizing the rich contributions to European culture that emanated from the East (one thinks of twentieth-century classical music, for instance), it seems fair to say that for most of the modern era Eastern Europe was on the receiving end in the circulation of cultural goods. This is not to diminish the rich cultural life of small nations and the sense of national belonging that it nurtured. Indeed it was precisely the effort of cultural self-improvement—a strong tradition from the early nineteenth century—that encouraged an engagement of Eastern European intellectuals with the communist project.

Communism in Eastern Europe collapsed mainly due to its internal deficiencies. A quarter of a century after the event, however, it becomes obvious that we cannot read its history as a preordained failure. No doubt, communism suffered from fundamental contradictions—*Hauptwidersprüche*, to speak with Marx—caused by regional and historical peculiarities. Nevertheless, it was a system that lasted for several decades and evolved over time. These contradictions, however paradoxical it may seem, produced a certain stability or, at least, were successfully mastered for a remarkably long period of time. In what follows I concentrate on four areas of fundamental contradiction in East

European communism which kept the system alive even as they conditioned its eventual collapse.

Nation and Class

Throughout the history of Eastern European communism there was an uneasy marriage between nation and class, the two key ideas of European modernity. The complex relationship between nation-building and the labour movement reached back into the late imperial period, whether under the Habsburgs or Romanovs. Often in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, social inequality and class struggle were articulated in national terms. Already in Austrian social democracy the nationality issue had arisen to complicate united class-based revolutionary action. After 1918, the split in the working-class movement between reformist social democrats and revolutionary communists, in part, mirrored the national issue. The social democrats accepted new nation-states and became a 'state-forming' force, while communists took an anti-nation-state position, considering themselves sections of the new Communist International. With the rising threat of fascism in the mid-1930s, however, communists adopted the strategy of the 'popular front' and this allowed for cooperation with socialist and petit-bourgeois parties. 'Popular frontism', a nation-based legitimization of social revolution, broadly remained the framework of communist movements until the rise of Stalinism in the late 1940s. In the immediate post-war years, popular frontism became the platform for 'people's democracy'—a short-lived period, yet one that was critical for the subsequent self-understanding of East European communists.[3] However, the political situation had changed radically as a result of the war and the post-war settlement. Some countries that had been multinational states became ethnically homogenous, such as Poland; others significantly reduced their ethnic diversity, such as Czechoslovakia. Some retained their heterogeneity but later suppressed minorities systematically as happened in Romania and Bulgaria after 1956. The ethno-cultural dimension of the nation, moreover, was overdetermined by the ideological category of the 'working people', a category that embraced the industrial working class, the smallholding peasantry, and 'working intelligentsia', all drawn predominantly from the same ethnicity. People's democracies were thus a continuation of popular frontism of the 1930s, but one now radicalized along class lines. An ethnically defined plebs stood opposed to the traditional hierarchical social order, against the middle classes and the nobility, and against the Church.[4]

Initially after 1945, Stalin tolerated the politics of 'national roads to socialism', and thus of coalitions with non-communist democratic parties, since he still hoped for an agreement with the West.[5] Genuine revolutions from below were not on the agenda. With the onset of the Cold War, however, he reconfigured the symbiotic relationship between nation and class. With the slogan 'sharpening the class struggle during the construction of socialism', class came to predominate over nation. As the war receded from memory,

nationalistic radicalism—mainly directed against Germans and Hungarians—faded, as East Germany and Hungary were accepted into the family of socialist nations. The focus now shifted from external foes (Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Turks) to 'class enemies' within the nation and later within the communist parties themselves. By this stage, the concept of 'people' (*Volk, lid, lud*) had become so class-loaded that further exploitation of nationalism seemed unnecessary. Symptomatically, Tito's greatest crime in this period was that of 'nationalism'. And attacks on 'right-wing nationalist deviations' and 'bourgeois nationalism' were key features of Stalinism, especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

In countries such as Poland and Hungary, however, Stalinist rule quickly came to be perceived as anti-national, a vehicle of alien Soviet domination. Here anti-communism merged with antisemitism as concepts such as Polish *żydokomuna* (Judaeo-Communism) suggest. Jewish communists, often of German cultural background and with German names, were seen by many as anti-national elements. In Poland where the fusion of antisemitism with anti-Bolshevism had deep roots, popular anger turned against Stalinist politicians of Jewish background such as Jakub Berman and Hilary Minc. The same happened to Mátyás Rákosi in Hungary and to Ana Pauker in Romania. In Czechoslovakia, antisemitism surfaced with unprecedented brutality in the Slánský process in 1952. The Party's General Secretary Slánský, an exemplary Stalinist, became one of Stalinism's foremost victims, epitomizing the complicated relation of Jews to communism.[6] Jews had joined communist movements on a wide scale before the Second World War since they appeared to offer an antidote to the deepening nationalism of the interwar years. The experience of Nazism and the Holocaust reinforced this attitude, so that the few Jews who survived joined communist parties on a significant scale after 1945. Yet soon the perceived over-representation of Jews, together with the emergence of Israel as one of main imperialist enemies, changed this. Overt campaigns against Jews would cease with Stalin's death, but there were later outbursts of antisemitism in ruling communist parties, notably the 'anti-Zionist' purges in Poland in 1968. In Czechoslovakia the campaign against Charter 77 in the late 1970s also bore signs of antisemitism, directed particularly against František Kriegel, a leading figure of the Prague Spring.

The popular perception of Stalinist rule as 'alien to the nation' was a powerful driving force behind the uprisings of 1956. The crises not only led to de-Stalinization, but revived the idea of 'national roads to socialism'. Most spectacular was the Polish October when Władysław Gomułka, excluded from the Party and imprisoned for 'right-wing and nationalist deviation' in 1948, returned to power to the delight of the masses. As a symbol of anti-Stalinist struggle and 'Polish socialism', Gomułka restored the balance between class and nation. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, as in Poland, the class principle as a discriminatory measure was weakened and collectivization of agriculture, seen as the most striking example of Sovietization, was slowed or halted. But this did not proceed smoothly everywhere. In Romania the shift from internationalism to 'national communism' as the key source of communist legitimization took place without a change of personnel in the political leadership. Moreover, communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej responded to de-Stalinization with a new wave of terror.[7]

In the post-Stalinist era self-representation through nationalist propaganda became essential to the legitimation strategies of the East European regimes. In Poland in the 1960s, as the regime's legitimacy diminished through its declining performance in economic and social-welfare policies, anti-German tones became stronger appeared in official propaganda. Even more radical nationalism followed the rise to power of Nicolae Ceauşescu in Romania in 1965. In comparison to Gheorghiu-Dej, who cautiously fluctuated between loyalty to the Soviets and national autonomy, Ceauşescu struck an independent stance from the outset, culminating in his 1968 rejection of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. In the course of the 1970s Ceauşescu's imagery turned into a byzantine form of nationalist self-representation that had no comparison except in Albania.[8] Yet 'national communism' was not only associated with increasingly dictatorial rule. In Czechoslovakia Slovak demands for autonomy became a central issue in the reform agenda during the Prague Spring. Slovak Party members persecuted during Stalinism for 'bourgeois nationalism', such as Gustáv Husák, were released and rehabilitated. Although led by the Slovak Alexander Dubček, the Prague Spring was essentially a Czech national project that drew on the traditional self-description of Czechs as a democratic and peaceful nation. Interestingly, however, the only achievement of the Prague Spring that was not withdrawn during 'normalization' was the federalization of the country which had been a concession to Slovak national aspirations.

In Yugoslavia the 1963 reformist constitution, amended in 1968, brought in elements that reinforced national differences between the federal republics. The legislative independence of each republic was increased by enhancing the power of the Chamber of Nationalities and by granting Kosovo and Vojvodina the status of provinces within Serbia. The whole of political and economic life, including worker self-management, was increasingly organized along ethnic lines. The Constitution of 1974 promoted decentralization still further, practically transforming Yugoslavia into a confederation. During the 1980s, internationalism and class consciousness, embodied by the Yugoslav slogan 'Brotherhood and Unity', gave way to ethnic identification in the working class itself. The more developed republics of Slovenia and Croatia resented the subsidies they had to pay to more backward regions and the spectre surfaced of 'Serbian centralism' and 'Croatian nationalism'.[9] Only Tito's tactical genius kept these tensions under control, and he was to die in 1980. In Czechoslovakia, similar anxieties about 'Prago-centrism' and Slovak particularism grew in the 1970s and 1980s among the ruling bureaucracy.

In the long run, nation and class succeeded in cohabiting, even if this was never easy. It is difficult to come to a clear conclusion on whether national beliefs underpinned or undermined communist rule. There is no doubt that the national idea could bolster communist power, as in the 1960s. Yet we know, too, that the collapse of communism was at least partly provoked by national tensions. It also provoked a flare-up of ethnic conflict that ranged in intensity from the relatively mild 'hyphen war' as to whether Czechoslovakia or Czecho-Slovakia was correct, through to the ethnic violence on the streets of Târgu Mureş in Romania—both events that took place in March 1990. Nationality issues would be the most critical legacy of communism.

Power and Society

After 1989, interpretations of Eastern European communism resurrected the classic paradigm of totalitarianism that depicted society as suffering under the yoke of an almighty state. The German political scientist Sigrid Meuschel coined the term 'shut-down society' (*stillgelegte Gesellschaft*), according to which societies under state socialism had undergone a process of non-differentiation (*Entdifferenzerung*) whereby group interests and autonomous social subsystems had ceased to exist. Society was swallowed by its antagonist, the state, he argued. In fact, the understanding of state–society relations that had been developed by Eastern European oppositionists from the late 1960s onwards had been rather different. According to them, a 'civil society' had developed beyond the reach of 'power', yet without becoming the dialectical adversary of the latter. Václav Havel's famous essay of 1978 features a greengrocer who hangs a sign in his shop window saying 'Workers of the World Unite'. For Havel this illustrated the interdependence of 'power' and society, in that the grocer was both victim and co-creator of the 'regime'. Whether the grocer was motivated by fear or by a certain identification with official values, such as the notorious right to have the 'peace to work' (*klid k práci*), the message was clear: in order to survive, the regime needed toleration or even support from below. Social historians of Stalinism too tended from the 1970s to complicate the dichotomy of a state clearly opposed to society. Whereas the totalitarian model focused on terror and physical force, 'revisionist' historians of Stalinism, such as Sheila Fitzpatrick, looked to 'ordinary life in extraordinary times' in order to understand how state-socialist regimes, while retaining great coercive power, won a degree of public acceptance.

The formative years of communist regimes—roughly up to 1956—were characterized by mass mobilization and repression on a substantial scale. It was a period when violence was used to reshape social relations. In Hungary in the early 1950s over 1 million citizens were investigated by the prosecuting authorities, which meant that practically every third family was subject to some form of political harassment.[10] Such a huge operation, however, could not be carried out by the repressive organs alone: it relied on the acquiescence or active collaboration of those who benefited—or who hoped to benefit—from the new order. But this was also a period when opportunities for upward social mobility opened up for many workers, peasants, and activists, if not on the same scale as in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. From the mid-1950s the most egregious Stalinist 'excesses' were removed, as party leaderships stopped the fanatical hunt for 'class enemies' and released thousands of political prisoners. Cases of the 'violation of socialist legality' were investigated, which resulted in the rehabilitation of many who had been unjustly persecuted. In the post-Stalinist era, mass mobilization and untrammelled violence ceased, but power and society became even more intertwined, interacting across many spaces of everyday life. In order to survive, communist dictatorships had to be 'normalized' and so they developed a sophisticated system of domination based on mutuality between rulers and ruled. Socialist citizens learned to arrange their 'ordinary lives' in a world permeated with ideology, and to reshape official directives to meet

their needs. As historians of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*) have argued, 'power' was a product of social interaction between rulers and ruled and cannot be understood as the antithesis of society. 'Power' could arrest people and send them to labour camps, but coercion alone could not persuade people to become village mayor, the leader of work brigade, or a local police assistant.[11] These pursuits presupposed that citizens accepted existing arrangements, and that there was some overlap between the interests of citizens and the state. This was not so much about citizens' explicit approval of communism, rather it was an effect of the way in which power was materialized in the banal world of the 'everyday', how it was reproduced through quotidian interests, practices, and beliefs. This is not to doubt the uneven distribution of power, it is simply to question the idea that the dominated were utterly powerless. A small illustration can be seen in the efforts of the authorities to encourage working people to take up opportunities to improve their professional qualifications.[12] This was a campaign aimed at improving skill levels in the workplace, but for many citizens the opportunity to study at evening class was the first step that would take them out of the workplace. People, in other words, acted out of self-interest, even when they were positively oriented to the goals of the regime. The effect was to establish a form of co-creation of power 'from below' on which the regime came to rely.

A crucial feature of the Stalinist period was that the party had been violated by the state apparatus, manifest in the dominance of the security organs. The post-Stalinist period saw the revival of the party as the central organ of power. The centrality of the 'democratic' party was stressed anew in official ideology, underscoring its superiority over the state. In some countries this led to the party regaining popular support. In Poland Gomułka almost acquired the status of national hero following 1956, and in Hungary, following the suppression of the Budapest uprising, János Kádár came to be seen more as a national saviour than a national traitor. However, the 'leading role' of the party continued to be unchallengeable dogma. Even in relatively liberal Yugoslavia, when Milovan Djilas questioned this dogma in 1953, he was promptly expelled. In like manner, when Imre Nagy called in 1956 for a plural party system and for 'democratic cooperation between the coalition parties, reborn in 1945', he was ruthlessly quashed by the Soviets.[13] In 1968 the issue proved to be a major stumbling block in the Prague Spring, which advocated democratic pluralism while seeking to preserve the leading role of the Party. In the end, it was the spectre of a multi-party system that caused the Warsaw Pact to intervene. If parties regained full control in the wake of Stalinism, they could not be monolithic, since they were the only forum in which political debate could be articulated. This became evident in the sharp debates that took place in most parties following Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956 denouncing the 'cult of personality'. In most countries, too, there was a significant divide between the apparat of the parties and the rank-and-file membership.

After 1968, 'socialist society' became a key term in political discourse, as was illustrated by the Action Programme of the Czechoslovak Communist Party of April 1968. Yet it would be an exaggeration to assume that this was a reflection in official ideology of the emergence of a 'civil society' that would lead ultimately to the demise of the system.

As we have seen, large parts of society accepted the regimes. Indeed, if measured by the number of informers, state surveillance actually expanded in late socialism, although we should not interpret this as arising from the fear that ruling parties had of their citizens. As Jens Gieseke has noted, one of the myths surrounding the Stasi is that it was concerned primarily with monitoring dissidents and an evolving civil society. In fact, its prime targets were the Party and the military and security forces.[14] Rather than terrorizing the masses, the Stasi had a rather patronizing attitude to society, epitomized in the exclamation of Stasi Chief Erich Mielke 'Ich liebe Euch doch alle!' (I love you all!) in 1990. Nevertheless, as Katherine Verdery has argued, surveillance 'created an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion dividing people from one another. One never knew whom one could trust, who might be informing on one to the police about one's attitudes toward the regime or about one's having an American to dinner.'[15]

The relationship between regime and society in late socialism is often described as a 'new social contract'. Citizens were given 'peace' in the private sphere, evinced in Czech weekend-houses (*chalupa*) and pubs (*hospoda*), yet were expected to refrain from political activity. This interpretation, however, is shaky, since it does not explain why the contract ceased to function. Havel was right to argue that the greengrocer did not reflect on the meaning of the slogan he hung in his shop window, yet the grocer knew it *made sense* in the given circumstances, since it helped to preserve his 'peace to work'. The fall of the regime happened when the context changed so that it no longer made sense, i.e. when the common sense of communism was challenged by political alternatives such as perestroika, nationalism, or human rights. At that point, the regimes lost legitimacy very rapidly, evinced in the stunned expression on Ceauşescu's face as he stood on the balcony overlooking the square in Bucharest in December 1989.

Production and Consumption

Undoubtedly, one of the sources of communism's collapse was the regimes' incapacity to satisfy the growing consumption needs of their citizens. In his first address to the nation as the president of Czechoslovakia in 1990, Havel bluntly captured the main problem of the communist economy: 'We are producing things that no one needs. And we lack those things that we need terribly.' But again this fails to answer the question of why the system fell at the moment it did, given that the production of consumer goods was satisfactory in Czechoslovakia or the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and rather good in Yugoslavia and Hungary, certainly compared with Poland and Romania.

As a region perceived to be economically backward, industrial production became a shibboleth of socialist construction after the Second World War. For Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, most parts of Yugoslavia, Romania, and Bulgaria, building communism became synonymous with overcoming economic backwardness. Apart from East Germany and the Czech Lands, this was the region's first experience of mass industrialization. Ironically, as Zygmunt Bauman noted, the obsession with industrial growth—the

ideology of tons of coal and steel produced—led to the domestication of a capitalist culture of a distinctly nineteenth-century vintage.[16] At the same time, the Eastern European states took up the ideology of planning that was then in vogue, and maintained it long after it fell from fashion in Western Europe. Despite persistent efforts at market reforms, the history of communist economies has been described as a cascade 'from plan to plan', in reference to the GDR.[17] It was in Yugoslavia in April 1947 that the first plan was launched and it was soon followed by other countries. Large enterprises were nationalized immediately, but from the late 1940s the ideological battle concentrated on small businesses and agriculture. The collectivization of agriculture reached its peak around 1950 but slowed down after 1953, especially from 1956. By 1952, the socialized sector of industry ranged from 100 per cent in Bulgaria to 77 per cent in GDR.[18] On the whole, nationalization was supported by the public.

Sooner or later central planning gave rise to grave problems in all countries. The needs of producers and planners diverged, and so plan targets were generally mismatched; and the prioritization of production over consumption meant that the needs of citizens always figured low on the plan agenda. The result was that consumer goods were always in short supply and subject to arbitrary pricing. Queuing became a way of life, paving the way for the growth of the 'second economy' and widespread corruption. Despite these well-known deficiencies, central planning tended to be viewed as a fact of life. Public acceptance of planning was not significantly shaken by the fact that, as Geoffrey and Nigel Swain noted, 'the planning system that had achieved some success in dragging the East European economies out of their peasant backwardness, proved incapable of adapting to the demands of an urban consumer society'.[19] In Czechoslovakia, even during the perestroika debates, the idea of abandoning planning completely met with resistance. During the discussion on the State Enterprise Law in 1987 the proposals for greater marketization were given a chilly reception, not least from the shop floor.[20] This was, in part, because planning had implanted itself as a cultural ideal, assumed to be superior to the anarchy of the capitalist market, even though everyone recognized its imperfect realization in practice. Even the operations of the secret police, as Katherine Verdery observed, were oriented towards the 'production' of files, their direct utilization being of secondary importance.[21] In response to the global economic downturn after 1973, the Yugoslav, Hungarian, and Polish governments resorted to borrowing and debt, introducing unemployment and inflation into their economies. In contrast, in Honecker's GDR, Husák's Czechoslovakia, and Ceauşescu's Romania planning actually intensified. By the 1980s, however, all communist governments were forced to take reform measures, measures that had come too little and too late.

In terms of its impact on society, rapid post-war industrialization brought about a huge increase in the size of the working class. In the 1960s, 55 per cent of the population of the GDR were industrial workers, and in more agrarian Bulgaria the working class grew from 29 to 42 per cent of the population between 1955 and 1965.[22] The demise of a distinct working-class culture was slower in Eastern than Western Europe. While in Western Europe the working class began to decline in the late 1960s, in the East, particularly in the Balkans, it continued to grow. In Yugoslavia

workers' self-management, combined with a sort of late popular frontism, kept the working class alive, valorized by its supposed role in combating bureaucracy.[23] Large industrial complexes like Nowa Huta in Poland, Rakovica in Serbia, or Ostrava in Czechoslovakia existed well into the 1980s. Proletarian centres of sociability, such as pubs, clubhouses, and sports associations, also survived, along with a social identity centred on the workplace, and a masculine identity bound up with the performance of physical work.[24] Strikes as a distinct component of working-class culture were, with the singular exception of Poland, sporadic or non-existent.[25] Yet wider social changes did begin to erode this working-class identity—above all, privatization and more individualized forms of consumption and leisure. In most countries, the revolutions of 1989 took place without the involvement of the working class, and since the fall of communism, global capitalism has reinforced the process of deindustrialization and working-class decomposition.

The superiority of production over consumption affected gender relations. Stalinism had been driven by the idea that participation in production and membership of the working class would bring about women's equality. Yet this placed a double burden on women who remained responsible for childcare, housework, and the consumption needs of the family. In Bulgaria, only 6 per cent of children were enrolled in kindergarten in the late 1950s, and the unpaid labour of reproduction of the household and family enabled the state to divert resources out of social welfare into other areas.[26] Late socialist governments did try to decrease the double burden on women, yet generally gender relations and norms remained rather traditional. In the 1970s family policy ranged from the brutal pro-natalism of Ceauşescu to broad maternity assistance in Czechoslovakia. In both cases, however, *motherhood* dominated social policy. As a result, by the 1990s traditional gender roles remained stronger in post-socialist societies than in Western Europe. Moreover, if certain professions, such as teachers or doctors, were more feminized than their Western counterparts, this was usually a sign that they were poorly paid. Only the sphere of consumption was something of an exception. Here women's centrality to the domestic sphere meant that they dominated consumer aspirations, through demand for washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and refrigerators and, increasingly, for fashion and cosmetics.[27]

In post-Stalinist Eastern Europe a distinctive socialist consumerism gradually took shape. The official policy of increasing the weight of consumer goods over producer goods opened a Pandora's box of individualized desire. The emergence of free time, the boom in leisure activities, and the increasing centrality of the domestic sphere were developments that were shared with Western consumer society. Yet consumerism under state socialism was overlain by particular difficulties of shortages and poor quality. This extended to areas such as housing, where 'panel houses' were highly desired, yet were generally of shoddy quality. During the 1970s and 1980s, the original ideal of collectivist housing gave way to aspirations for one's own home, a trend masterfully captured in Věra Chytilová's movie *Panelstory*. Communal spaces within the housing blocks were reconfigured, collective laundries (with their alarming mangles) being turned into bicycle storerooms. In spite of this, citizens in most countries did experience some

improvement in their consumption standards, especially if they moved from the countryside to the town.

Shopping across the border, first in Yugoslavia and then in Hungary, opened the eyes of many consumers.[28] And exposure to Western standards of living more generally raised awareness of the inferiority of consumption standards in Eastern Europe. Yet a desire to acquire Western consumer goods did not necessarily translate into resentment at communist rule; or more precisely, there was no causal relationship between this awareness and the decline of regime legitimacy. As Krisztina Fehérváry has argued: 'Problems like shortages, poor quality of goods and poverty, alongside perceptions of more abundant lifestyles elsewhere, can plague any nation-state, but in themselves they are incapable of producing a political logic.'[29] Standards of living in the Eastern Bloc increased steadily over decades, and though Czechs, Hungarians, and East Germans compared their conditions with West Germany and Austria, they also drew comparisons with the past and reflected on how much better off they were compared to their counterparts in Romania and Bulgaria where they spent their holidays. Even in the case of the GDR, it is hard to assess the political significance of the comparison with consumption in West Germany. The Politburo of the Socialist Unity Party admitted that most East German citizens watched the West German *Tagesschau* news each evening but it does not appear to have felt deeply threatened by this. With the important exception of Poland, where workers launched protests against increasing food prices, the specific constellation of socialist consumerism does not appear to have posed a direct challenge to the system until the late 1980s. In 1989 the fall of communism happened across the socialist countries, despite the considerable variety in standards of living.

Culture and Ideology

One of the legacies of the nineteenth-century national movements in the 'small nations' was that culture often substituted for politics. The outcome was not so much that culture became political, but rather that politics tended to be articulated in cultural and moral terms. In most countries, the 'intelligentsia', as the bearers of high culture, played an essential role in national life. This notion of the 'intelligentsia' remained vital in Poland through the communist era, as did the nineteenth-century ideal of the cultural activist in Czechoslovakia. 'Yugoslavism', too, rested on cultural foundations, and on both Western and Eastern sides of the border the German notion of *Bildung* lived on well into the second half of the twentieth century. The close interconnectedness of culture and national politics shaped political developments after 1945. Both 1956 and 1968 were high points of cultural history as well as political history, with artists and intellectuals invading the political sphere. But the story was never simply one of independent intellectuals criticizing 'power'. Indeed it is something of a Central European myth that intellectuals assumed a critical and non-ideological posture vis-à-vis power. In fact, culture and ideology fed off each other in the interwar period, with respect to fascism as much

as communism. Indeed already in the aftermath of the First World War, communism began to appeal to intellectuals and artists, Jaroslav Hašek, the author of *Good Soldier Schweik*, being exemplary. And from the 1920s, communist politics and modern art cohabited productively, whether in Bauhaus-influenced architecture or among writers such as Jaroslav Seifert in Prague and Aleksander Wat in Warsaw. For most national literatures, the 1920s was a 'Golden Age' that was never to return, with the partial exception of the 1960s. Ideology did not dominate art in this period, but it was a crucial component of it. Revolution and Progress as expressed through art and literature, and the construction of a revolutionary self through avant-garde art, were the order of the day. The rise of Stalin in the Soviet Union led to an attack on this fruitful symbiosis, first politically then aesthetically. Playfulness and innovation in art ceased to be considered appropriate. Communist parties instead turned sectarian in respect of cultural affairs and expelled progressive artists. The Second World War and anti-fascist resistance reversed the trend somewhat, but the scars remained. The Czech Marxist writer Záviš Kalandra chose not to rejoin the party after 1945 and was executed after a show trial in 1950.

After 1945, and with full force after 1948, socialist realism became the official style of artistic creation, albeit only for a short time. There were campaigns against both avant-gardism and 'nationalism', the leading Czech Marxist art theoretician, Karel Teige, for instance, being hounded to death in 1951 for being a Trotskyist.[30] Yet the idea of *Gleichschaltung* from above is misplaced. The parties could squeeze culture through an ideological grid, but could not determine what a new socialist art should look like. Typically, when Soviet writers asked Stalin to give them instruction on how to write a truthful socialist novel, Stalin replied: 'Write the truth'. There was no blueprint for aesthetics, in other words, and directives changed from day to day. 'Stalinist art' in Eastern Europe was anything but monolithic, so the influence of socialist realism should not be exaggerated. In Yugoslavia, socialist realism was abandoned already in 1950/1. In Czechoslovakia the campaign to impose Soviet-model socialist realism in the plastic arts was met with embarrassment and its impact was limited. Even during the worst days of Stalinism many artists tended to go their own way.[31]

De-Stalinization after 1956 restored institutional and conceptual plurality at an official level, and this was paralleled by demands for reform from below. Writers and critics called for a new approach to literature to replace the Stalinist 'construction novel', demanding an end to ideological simplifications and the return of psychological concerns that would decompose the schematic 'socialist hero'. The new hero was no longer to be a hollow political-ideological type but was to mirror the diversity and contradictoriness of social reality. As a Czech literary theorist put it in 1963: 'This heroism can be shown in many environments and under various circumstances, in many specific contexts. If writers saw everywhere the same conditions, it would be senseless to write novels.'[32] Stories and characters thus became more intricate and ambivalent. Partisans fighting against Nazis experienced political and moral ambiguities in a way that was alien to socialist realism. In Aleksandar Petrović's film *Three* (1965) or Živojin Pavlović's *The Ambush* (1969), the figure of the partisan is complicated as patriotism

and revolutionary fervour give way to recognition of the horrors of war.[33] Perhaps most famously, *Shop on Main Street* (1965) by Ján Kádár and Elmar Klos dealt with the issue of moral ambivalence vis-à-vis the Holocaust, staging fear as a crucial component of war. The effort to render war movies less schematic was also evident in the 'anti-hero' that Jiří Menzel brought to perfection in his *Closely Watched Trains* (1966). Pathetically or comically, many of these 1960s movies dwelt on the ambiguous issue of collaboration, reacting against the ideologization and schematic heroism of Stalinism, yet fired by an urge to find the 'lost meaning' of socialist revolution. Many post-Stalinist movies commented politically on the present, explicitly as in Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Marble* or indirectly as in Miloš Forman's *Fireman's Ball*. De-Stalinization did not liberate culture from ideology, it restructured their mutual coexistence, undermining the big utopian narrative of socialist revolution and the formation of the New Man and focusing attention on the complexities of everyday life under socialism. At the level of aesthetics, the shift was manifest in the splitting of the formerly omniscient narrative voice into a plenitude of small storylines. Typically, decentred and fragmented 'narrated narrations' became a favourite device, as meticulously conducted in Bohumil Hrabal's and Ivo Andrić's stories, set in a Prague beerhouse or a Bosnian divan. What happened after 1956 can be described as a transformation from a 'programmatic' to 'processual' utopia. The latter rejected any grand design of alternative society, abandoning ideal fantasies and mythical images as forms of expression. Instead, it drew on indeterminacy and the open-endedness of human life, on historical ambiguity and contradictions. To quote Ernst Bloch, the post-Stalinist artistic utopia was a 'permanent open process of envisioning what is not yet'.[34] From now on, socialist utopia manifested itself in the sphere of everyday life, in a belief in a better future but one that should not be achieved regardless of cost.

With some modifications, this relationship between culture and utopian ideology remained in force in late socialism, whether in Husák's 'normalization', Honecker's 'developed socialism', or Kádár's 'goulash communism'. Even the most 'normalized' years brought critical movies that became rare after 1989. In most socialist countries, the artistic exploration of Stalinism continued, as did the quest for truth and authenticity in confronting problems of everyday life, such as the condition of women or youth. Feminist issues, however, were no longer depicted as graphically as in the movies of Věra Chytilová and Márta Mészáros in the 1960s. Nevertheless, movies such as those by Marie Poledňáková in Czechoslovakia exploring the issue of fatherhood or films that tackled issues of bullying among working-class youth retained a critical yet subtle edge. The productive symbiosis of culture and ideology continued into the 1980s, with glasnost and perestroika enabling artists to touch on uncomfortable subjects such as corruption, drug abuse, and criminality. Krzysztof Kieszlowski's *Short Film about Killing* (1988) crowned this upswing of critical cinema. Though they exposed deficiencies in the socialist system, the very act of criticism implied that artists took that system seriously. Indeed, it may be argued that in tackling social problems without attacking key values, they reinforced the legitimacy of the system. Only at the end of the 1980s did this relation fall apart as the language of socialism came to be massively questioned on the

'cultural front'. One could counter that late socialism was more evidently a time when an apolitical popular culture flourished, as in the West, epitomized in pop songs about love and happiness. Yet this was true only to a limited extent: in contrast to the West, for example, the genre of protest songs remained influential through the 1970s and 1980s, with singers like Karel Kryl, Jaromír Nohavica, Wolf Biermann, or Jacek Kaczmarski. Only after 1989 did this genre go into steep decline.

Did ideological constraints produce better art than conditions that are seemingly free of ideology? Let us take the example of cinema before and after 1989. It is hard to claim that movies grew better after the fall of communism. If one examines the work of Wajda or Menzel, one has to conclude that their post-communist work is *worse*. Moreover, attempts by the younger generation to come to terms with the communist past have produced frustrating kitsch such as the German film *Goodbye, Lenin!* or the Czech film *Pelíšky.* Protest singers, creative and challenging under communism, have died or become an embarrassment. In 1989 communism fell decisively, but with it perished also a challenge that had provoked and inspired many artists. With the advent of freedom and the decline of ideology in Eastern Europe, the critical calling of culture was diminished, at least for a time.

Conclusion

With the passage of time, we begin to see the era of communism differently. Writing in 1998, Sabrina Ramet suggested that the defining feature of Eastern European communism was that 'politics and economics were closely linked'. From the perspective of the mid-2010s, we may ask what has changed, given the huge interpenetration of business and politics and the unprecedented scale of corruption. Corruption actually increased as a result of the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, as subsidies from Brussels poured in. This dismal observation fits Ivan Berend's observation that the history of Eastern Europe in the second half of the twentieth century may be read as a 'detour from the periphery to the periphery'. Of course, this assessment is open to debate; and after two decades in which scholarship was dominated by struggles about the memory of communism—whether it was good or bad—it is time to approach the history of Eastern European communism from a Rankean perspective, as an epoch 'immediate to God', a period to be understood in its own terms, yet embedded in a wider context of European history. This requires that we give up the conception of Eastern European communism as a 'deviation' from an ultimately triumphant direction of historical development. On an analytical level, Eastern European communist experience was not an aberration from 'modernity' but a different form of 'modernity' that can be used to reflect comparatively on what modernity signifies. Historians should take issue with views that dwell doggedly on the binary division between East and West, dictatorship and democracy, and instead look at capitalism, socialism, and post-colonialism as parts of a global network of mutual interactions and relationships. As Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery

have argued: 'The comprehensive post-Cold War frame we advocate prompts investigation of connections and comparisons across imperial formations past and present, bringing together European empires of previous centuries, Cold War empires and their Third World client-states, late twentieth-century corporate power, and forms of twenty-first-century capitalism.'[35] In such a perspective, 'Eastern Europe' loses its subordinate status as the 'periphery' and the specific *Hauptwidersprüche* of Eastern European communism that we have examined can be analysed in terms of wider comparative and global networks. The battle for interpretations of Eastern European communism is by no means over. Just as with the French Revolution or National Socialism, communism will never be fully 'explained' and political challenges will constantly pose new questions and offer fresh angles on events that have been investigated a hundred times before. Future students of modern European history should begin by taking note of what Ivan Berend said about his own life under communism: 'It was sometimes quite unbearable and frightening but always extremely interesting.'[36]

Notes

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CHAPTER 12

COMMUNISM IN CHINA, 1900–2010

YANG KUISONG AND STEPHEN A. SMITH

Chinese Communism, 1919–1976

Yang Kuisong (translated by Stephen A. Smith)

In China the earliest formulation of an embryonic notion of 'communism' can be found in the 1853 'Land System of the Heavenly Dynasty' promulgated by the rebels of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.[1] It states that the future society will be organized as follows: 'There will be fields and all will cultivate them; there will be food and all shall eat; there will be clothes and all will be dressed; there will be money and all will use it; inequality will cease, all will be fed and warm.' The earliest Chinese writer who depicted the future communist ideal was the reformist leader Kang Youwei (1858–1927), who was sent into exile following the failure of the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898.[2] He began to work out his ideas for a book as early as 1884, although it was not until he was in exile that he began to systematize his ideas and publish parts of what became his *Book of Great Unity*. Borrowing a concept from the *Liyun* section of the Confucian *Book of Rites*, namely that of 'great unity' (*datong*), Kang argued that the society of the future would be one purged of the state, and of class, racial, family, and other divisions. 'All under heaven will be held in common, there will be no class divisions, all will be equal.' According to Kang, the means of production would be publicly owned, the economy would be planned, and everyone would have a rightful place in society.

The first Chinese specifically to advocate 'socialism' and 'communism' was the revolutionary nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), who in 1905 formulated his 'Three People's Principles', a political programme that would influence Chinese politics for the next half-century. In addition to 'nationalism' and 'people's rights', the third principle was the 'people's livelihood', which was formulated as a result of Sun's awareness of the social question that was plaguing Europe and the USA. For Sun, 'people's livelihood' was

equivalent to 'socialism' and 'communism'. Traditional Chinese culture was not unfamiliar with socialist ideas: proverbs such as 'Everything under heaven belongs to all' and 'People do not worry about poverty but about the uneven distribution of wealth' had long been familiar. From ancient times philosophers such as Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Mozi had advocated the equal division of inherited property, the removal of class constraints and distinctions between rich and poor, and the promotion of officials according to merit via the imperial examination system. This left a deep mark on Chinese thinkers and continued to influence political orientations and choices into the modern era. Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen initially devoted themselves to studying bourgeois models drawn from the USA and Europe. As a result of visiting the USA and Europe at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, they noted with alarm the huge disparities between rich and poor, the deep class divisions, social upheavals, and severe social ills, and it was this that sparked their interest in European and American socialism, and later in communism. Both hoped that China might avoid the capitalist path of development pioneered by the West, pointing out that China in the early twentieth century was an overwhelmingly rural society where social divisions and class antagonisms were still underdeveloped. For this reason, both Kang and Sun praised communist ideals, while remaining unenthusiastic about the abolition of private property as a means to that end. Kang Youwei and reformists of his type believed that society should advance gradually. Sun believed that political power must first be seized and then used to implement a series of social policies designed to limit capital and organize distribution on an equal basis.

The earliest thinkers in China to advocate communism by means of a revolutionary overthrow of current society were a handful of radical anarchist intellectuals. The most famous was Liu Shifu (1884–1915) who in July 1914 established an 'Anarchist Communist Comrade Society', which advocated establishing a stateless society by means of a general strike. Influenced by the rise of anarchist ideas, the May Fourth Movement of 1919, which encompassed the New Culture Movement, was broadly anarchist in its politics, and this facilitated the birth of a Chinese communist party.[3] Anarchists were both internationalists and advocates of violent revolution and so initially looked with sympathy on Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. Moreover, following the victory of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, when there was widespread domestic and foreign opposition to the Bolsheviks, the principal leader of Russian anarchism, Pëtr Alexeevich Kropotkin, called on his followers to support the revolution.[4] Inevitably, this influenced his disciples in China.

In 1920 the Comintern pushed for the formation of a Chinese Communist Party (CCP). There were already small groups of communists in several localities in which anarchists were influential. In Guangzhou the 'communists' who formed a party in late 1920 received some support from Russians seeking to spread revolution. In Shanghai the earliest leader of the communist cell, Chen Duxiu, collaborated with G. D. Voitinskii, the Russian Communist Party representative in China, to establish a party in November 1920. Its aims and policies were largely copied from those of the Russian party. The CCP soon entered the Communist International (Comintern), which was under the

leadership of the Bolsheviks, becoming one of its national sections. The CCP relied on the financial and political resources of the Russian leadership for the development of party work.

The CCP held its first congress in July 1921. At that time it had just fifty members. Apart from some prominent intellectuals, these were students and elementary and middle-school teachers. In its early years, the growth of the party was limited. Up to the end of 1923, in a country with a population of over 400 million, there were no more than 1,000 members. However, from 1922, at the behest of the Comintern, the CCP adopted the policy of the united front. The tasks of the revolution were now seen as falling into two phases: in the first phase, all revolutionary forces within the country should unite to achieve a national democratic revolution; the second socialist phase would only come later. The Soviet Union played upon the eagerness of Sun Yat-sen and his Nationalist Party, the Guomindang (GMD), to gain foreign support for the national revolution in China. As a condition of giving him support, the Comintern persuaded Sun to allow Communists to join the GMD as individual members, thereby implementing what became known as the 'united front from within' between the two parties. Nationalist–Communist cooperation allowed the Communists to acquire influence on the domestic and foreign policy-making of the GMD, and to use the party as a way of operating publicly across the country. By 1925, the CCP had about 10,000 members. By spring 1927, it had more than 57,000 members, becoming China's biggest revolutionary force after the GMD.

The CCP was organized according to the Bolshevik model; its strategy and practical work were modelled on Russian revolutionary experience and crafted under the detailed direction of the Comintern. Since the Russian Revolution had gone through a process of progressive splitting with the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties, the Comintern dictated that the CCP should cooperate with the GMD but work to engineer a situation where it could ultimately break with the party. In the event, the opposite happened, for in summer 1927 the GMD brutally ruptured relations with the CCP. As a result, the party lost 80 per cent of its members and was forced underground. However, Moscow did not draw the appropriate lessons from this disaster. It concluded that the Chinese revolution had developed to a point analogous to the situation reached in Russia in 1917, and thus decreed that the Chinese revolution had entered a new 'soviet' phase. It called on the CCP to seize major cities through armed uprisings. 'Soviet' revolution implied that all classes apart from the workers and peasants were enemy forces, and this led to the CCP's becoming abnormally isolated, with armed uprisings frequently turning into burning, looting, and retaliation. In the end, the forces of the CCP were almost completely driven out of the cities.

The only positive outcome of the period of armed uprisings was that the CCP was forced to create its own armed force, learning to use the vastness of China's territory, its poor transportation links, the existence of rival warlord fiefdoms, and the power vacuums that existed in border regions to create base areas in remote rural regions of south China. In autumn 1931, while the GMD was trying to conquer remaining warlord territories, Japan invaded Manchuria in a massive military action designed to erode China's

territorial integrity. Over the next years the Japanese steadily encroached on Chinese territory, causing deep divisions within the GMD as to how to respond. Taking advantage of the straitened circumstances of the GMD, the CCP with the aid of the Comintern established its own state on 7 November 1931, the Chinese Soviet Republic, on the border between Fujian and Jiangxi provinces. This republic lasted barely three years, coming under sustained assault from the GMD. Its failure, however, was due not only to the the great disparity in armed strength between the GMD's National Revolutionary Army and the Communist armed forces, but also to Moscow's hostility to any united front, which tended to 'drive the fish into deep waters and the sparrows into the thickets', and to its imposition of a Leninist policy of class struggle.[5] The CCP saw the political forces of the centre as the most dangerous enemy and rejected the idea of uniting militarily and politically with the GMD. Secondly, it treated all conflicts within the party as issues of class struggle, and this led to a succession of serious errors that intensified the struggle to 'eliminate counter-revolution' (*sufan*). The gravest incident of misguided killing occurred in 1930 in Futian, when over 4,000 soldiers in an army of thousands were killed, and tens of thousands in the local party and political organs who were implicated in the affair also lost their lives.

In 1933–4 the GMD army finally captured the soviet region from the CCP. The Central Committee and its local armed forces were forced to move as far from their southern base as possible. Encircled by different Nationalist forces, and with no way to maintain a footing in the south-west, several detachments commenced the Long March in 1935–6 and eventually settled in the northern parts of Gansu and Shaanxi provinces in north-west China. Here they were essentially hemmed into a small barren area by troops of the National Revolutionary Army and by local warlords. The CCP only narrowly escaped extermination. Yet on 12 December 1936 its luck changed, when Zhang Xueliang, commander-in-chief of the Communist suppression campaign in the north-west and an ally of the Shaanxi warlord Yang Hucheng, unexpectedly staged a coup against the GMD leadership. Using the North Eastern Army, which was under Zhang's command, and Yang's Seventeenth Route Army, they kidnapped Premier Chiang Kai-shek and several senior military and political leaders, who had come to oversee the Communist suppression campaign, and held them captive in Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi. The Soviet government and Comintern intervened to bring about a peaceful resolution of the crisis. Chiang's vigorous efforts to annihilate the Communist military forces were brought to an end, and he was forced to ally for a second time with the CCP, in a united front against the Japanese. For their part, the CCP promised to cease all activity against the Nationalist government. Practically, this meant that the CCP's 'soviet area' in the north-west became a border region subject to the Nationalist government. The CCP recognized Chiang Kai-shek as China's leader and the CCP forces became an armed unit within the National Revolutionary Army.

The CCP's resurrection in part derived from the change in policy of the Comintern, announced in 1935,in response to Hitler's ascent to power in Germany in 1933. In support of the Soviet Union's campaign for collective security in Europe, the Comintern now called for a united front between Communists and anti-fascist forces. The Comintern

was more able to enforce this policy on the CCP Central Committee because the party's base in northern Shaanxi was reasonably close to the Soviet border. From 1935, the CCP applied the new, more open policy towards Zhang Xueliang, Yang Xucheng, and other local warlords and this laid the basis for the second united front between the CCP and the GMD following the Xi'an Incident. With the outbreak of full-scale war with Japan in summer 1937, the CCP continued to pursue the united front, cooperating with the forces of the political centre, and this led to the solid growth of the party. By 1945, when the war ended, the party, which eight years earlier had had only a small base of several counties in northern Shaanxi and an entirely insufficient force of 30,000 regular troops, had grown to include more than a dozen base areas, situated behind the Japanese lines, and two main armies of more than 1 million soldiers.

Following the end of the war, the GMD government, which had been confined to the south-west for most of the conflict, sought to extend its authority over the whole country. For its part, the CCP, also sought to strengthen its position by utilizing its enhanced military and political power as well as its advantageous geographical location. The result was a ferocious civil war that erupted in 1946. The efforts of the US government to mediate between the two parties came to nothing, and the onset of the Cold War meant that the Soviet Union secretly assisted the CCP while the US backed the GMD government. Unwilling to intervene directly in the civil war, the USA could only watch as Chiang Kai-shek's government experienced one military and political setback after another. The Nationalist strategy of retaining the cities at all costs proved ill advised when the Communists occupied the surrounding countryside. Nationalist generals, selected for loyalty to Chiang, failed to cooperate, and corruption in the army was rife. The government struggled to meet its costs by printing money with the result that businessmen, the salaried classes, intellectuals, and workers were hit hard by inflation. In the cities there was rapid erosion of confidence in the GMD government, and facing defeat it fled to Taiwan in 1949.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) was formally inaugurated on 1 October 1949. On 30 June Mao Zedong, the victorious leader of the CCP, had declared that China would 'lean to one side', i.e. towards the Soviets, and in his capacity as chairman of the CCP he went to the Soviet Union in December to sign a treaty of mutual cooperation and cement a military alliance. China was the largest communist state after the Soviet Union, and its successful seizure of power through an armed struggle that encircled the cities from the countryside was promoted by the PRC as a model for economically backward countries. In October 1951, with comprehensive assistance from the Soviet Union, China sent troops to Korea to fight the United Nation forces led by the USA. At the same time it gave support to the Việt Minh in its war with the French and later helped the North Korean and North Vietnamese communist governments.

In accordance with the theory of class struggle of Marx and Lenin, Mao Zedong had always advocated revolutionary dictatorship. Even during the war, his political goal had been a unified dictatorship of the revolutionary classes under CCP leadership or, at least, a coalition of which the CCP was a major part. Following the accession to power, taking into account the balance of forces and the practical need to maintain a united front, the

CCP at first established what was formally a coalition government with centrist political forces, a so-called people's democratic dictatorship. At every level of government, however, decision-making power was in the hands of the CCP. By 1954, when it was clear that its power was unassailable, the CCP, following the example of Stalin in 1936, induced the People's Representative Congress to pass a constitution that affirmed the political primacy of the CCP, and, in effect, legitimized the PRC as a one-party dictatorship.

Because China was a peasant country, in which the poor had been exploited by the well-to-do, the priority of the new government was to implement a policy of redistributing land to the tillers. Since land reform of a different kind was being implemented at almost the same time in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, the CCP seized on the method of class struggle as a way to distinguish its own policy. Rural communities were categorized into different classes, with the poorest villagers mobilized to denounce and struggle against so-called landlords and rich peasants. The land, houses, equipment, and property of the latter were then confiscated. A minority of landlords and rich peasants were executed or charged with criminal offences, but most, together with their families, were assigned to undergo reform through labour in the poor peasants' associations or put under the village government to labour under mass supervision (*jiandu laodong*). According to norms laid down by the Central Committee, 8 to 10 per cent of the rural population were deemed to be landlords and rich peasants. Not counting those who were killed or sentenced, more than 30 million people were forced to labour under mass supervision.

Another form of class struggle carried out by the CCP was the movement to suppress counter-revolutionaries. This occurred against the background of the Korean War and the nationwide mobilization to Oppose America and Support Korea, this latter mobilization being soon incorporated into the movement to suppress GMD special agents and counter-revolutionaries. The movement was multifaceted, but its basic aim was to strengthen the CCP's hold on power. In its first phase, it aimed to eliminate 'counter-revolutionary elements' from society. Those who had served in the old government but had remained on the mainland, those who had been members of the GMD or the GMD youth corps (San Qing Tuan), and those who had been secret police, military police, or members of similar organizations were all required to register with the government. Anyone who had killed or participated in killing workers, peasants, and CCP members was branded a 'person bearing a blood debt'. All who had occupied senior positions in the redemptive religious societies (*huidaomen*), all hoodlums and local despots who were the objects of 'great public anger' (*minfen ji da zhe*) were earmarked for suppression. In less than one year, the counter-revolutionary campaign led to the deaths of 712,000 people, the conviction of 1,290,000 people, the sentencing of 1,200,000 to forced labour, and the arrest and subsequent reeducation of another 380,000.

After this first phase of operations, the second and third phases of the counter-revolutionary suppression campaign targeted government and party officials: the aim was now to weed out the counter-revolutionary 'middle layers' (*zhong ceng*), i.e. cadres in army units and government organizations, and 'inner layers' (*nei ceng*), i.e. those who had wormed their way into the party itself. In the meantime,

Mao Zedong, realizing that many government and party cadres had succumbed to bribery and corruption after entering the cities from the countryside, interrupted the counter-revolutionary suppression campaign to launch the 'three antis' campaign against corruption, waste, and bureaucratism. This aimed to ferret out and punish all those who were abusing their power. In Mao's eyes, the phenomenon of large-scale bribery and corruption among party cadres could only have two causes: it derived either from infiltration of the party by evil people; or from the degeneration of officials who had succumbed to the 'sugar-coated bullets' fired by capitalist elements as part of their ideological attack on the revolution. Each organization and department was required to investigate the 'capitalist elements' who had sneaked into party and government organs and cadres were ordered to reveal their social contacts and those of their family members, especially contacts with people overseas or with family and friends who came from the exploiting classes. Such reports provided information of great use to the security organs, who used it to further expand the anti-counter-revolutionary struggle.

At the same time as launching the 'three antis' campaign, Mao Zedong also targeted the capitalist class with a 'five antis' campaign and intellectuals and students with the 'thought reform' campaign. In the first half of 1952, the 'five antis' comprehensively attacked businessmen and industrialists and anyone deemed to be a bearer of bourgeois ideology. In late 1952, Mao Zedong boldly claimed that the principal contradiction in contemporary society had already become that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and that China would soon be ready to begin the transformation of the means of production along socialist lines. Underpinning the call to prepare for the abolition of private ownership was the assumption that as the revolution progressed into the socialist phase it would meet ever more intense opposition from the capitalists.

In spring 1955 Mao Zedong ordered the arrest of the vice-mayor of Shanghai, Pan Hannian, who was accused of collaborating with the enemy. Pan, who had for a long time been a head of the CCP's intelligence organization, the Special Bureau, was accused with the writer Hu Feng and others of forming a counter-revolutionary clique. From this a series of shocking political actions followed, unleashing a new wave of mass movements to suppress counter-revolutionaries. The campaign, known as the 'elimination of counter-revolutionaries movement' (*sufan yundong*) involved the exposure and struggle of millions of people and lasted for five years. More than 20 million people in party and government units and in economic enterprises underwent 'back-to-back' (covert) or 'face-to-face' investigation. In the first two years alone, 1,770,000 people were investigated for their past misdeeds: 20 per cent were found to be serious violators, half of them being branded counter-revolutionaries or 'bad elements'.

As the 'elimination of counter-revolutionaries movement' was under way in 1956, Mao Zedong launched a rectification campaign to muster public support for the party's effort to improve the workings of government. Those inside and outside the party were encouraged to give their frank opinions to party officials, but Mao was shocked to learn that many were harshly critical, some going so far as to suggest the CCP introduce a democratic political system. In accordance with his belief in the primacy of class struggle, Mao concluded that such criticism reflected the determination of part of the

bourgeoisie to attack the CCP. He thus quickly dropped the so-called Hundred Flowers policy and in late spring 1957 launched an 'Anti-Rightist Campaign'. As a result, many who had voiced criticism of the party and government were branded 'rightist elements' or 'centre-rightist elements'. Across the country 550,000 people labelled rightists lost their jobs or were sent away for re-education through labour.

In seeking to uproot the hidden counter-revolutionary danger, the system of criminal, civil, and commercial law was bypassed and replaced with denunciation by the masses, and exposure, struggle, and indictment operated at every level. According to an internal report of the Public Security Bureau, in the four-year period from 1950 to 1954, 3,970,000 people nationally were arrested for being counter-revolutionaries or bad elements, of whom 800,000 were executed; in the four-year period from 1954 to 1958, 2,220,000 people nationally were arrested for the same crimes; in the four-year period from 1958 to 1962, another 3,440,000 people were arrested on the same basis. In the eight years from 1954 to 1962, the number of persons executed for counter-revolutionary and similar crimes was again around 800,000. In addition, because counties and communes had powers of law enforcement and conviction, up to the beginning of 1962, more than 4 million counter-revolutionaries or bad elements at local level were detained or 're-educated through labour'. Those who were punished were considered the dregs of society, and were subject to terrible conditions in labour camps, re-education centres, or while under 'mass' surveillance. The number of those who died from starvation and disease exceeded 500,000.

Stringent measures of social control, modern communications, and transportation, plus an extensive organizational network under party control, meant that hundreds of millions of people were subjected to an unprecedented semi-militarized system of administration. The freedom of citizens was massively constrained and the interests of intellectuals and those who were better off economically were seriously damaged. Yet this was a system that also produced a nation-state of unprecedented social unity and stability. Capitalizing on this unity, the CCP was able to mobilize the enormous human and material resources of the country to the greatest possible extent. The government transformed the face of town and countryside, embarked on large irrigation projects, built an industrial base and a military counterweight to neighbouring countries, and generally displayed phenomenal energy. In a few short years, with technical assistance and equipment from the Soviet Union, China created major industrial facilities and achieved the first industrial boom in modern times. In the course of the 1950s, the People's Liberation Army carried out a large-scale operation in North Korea, provided covert aid to North Vietnam, twice carried out large-scale shelling of Jinmen island, which was under GMD control, and attempted an invasion of Taiwan. In 1959 and 1960, it also waged a border war against India. In the mid-1960s, it provided substantial military assistance to North Vietnam, helping with air defence and the construction of roads.

As genuine communists, CCP leaders aspired to achieve socialism as rapidly as possible and then to go on to realize communism. China had relied largely on its own forces in coming to power. After 1949 Mao never wavered in his belief that the CCP could achieve yet greater feats. The first was to complete the task of building socialism in as

short a time as possible. In Russia the task had taken nineteen years—from October 1917 to 1936—in China, it took only seven years, from the accession to power in 1949 to the declaration in 1956 that private ownership of the means of production was abolished. The socialist foundations having been set, Mao now looked forward to the transition to communism. In 1958 he launched the Great Leap Forward in the economy and production, an attempt to catch up and surpass the level of productive forces of capitalist Britain and the USA in the shortest possible time. Simultaneously, he pushed for the establishment of people's communes on a grand scale—a new mode of social existence for the country's workers, peasants, traders, students, soldiers, and others and an attempt to make hundreds of millions live in a communist fashion. The campaign to accelerate the transition to communism saw local cadres, in their eagerness to accomplish miracles and to demonstrate their political credentials, falsify output statistics and concoct all kinds of grandiose schemes to realize communism within two to three years. Meanwhile, the coercive organization of the peasants into semi-militarized forms of collective living, the heavy burden of physical labour for long periods of the day, the accumulation of large amounts of grain in state and commune granaries, together with the waste of resources that resulted from collective living, conspired to produce a massive famine, to the great surprise of Mao Zedong and cadres at every level. In the country as a whole, tens of millions of peasants died of starvation and disease between winter 1958 and the beginning of 1960.

That the acceleration of socialist construction had led to such an appalling outcome was an object lesson for CCP leaders. From this time on, Mao never again meddled in economic affairs and curbed his impatience to achieve communism. In 1961, the Twenty-Second Congress of the Soviet Communist Party declared that the Soviet Union would reach communism within twenty years. Mao warned that socialism is a long historical period, which generally divides into two phases of underdeveloped and relatively developed socialism, the latter usually being longer than the first. According to Mao, China was still in the phase of underdeveloped socialism, and 'reaching the higher phase of socialism is still far in front of us'. The complete elimination of classes and the transition to communism 'might even take a few hundred years'. In line with this estimate of social development, Mao concluded that Marx, Lenin, and Stalin were incorrect in claiming that there would be no class struggle or class dictatorship under socialism. 'In socialist society, there are still classes, class contradictions and class struggles, there are still conservative strata, and there are still forms of "vested interests", still differences between intellectual and manual labor, differences between town and countryside, and differences between workers and peasants.'[6] Thus, there still exist a proletariat and a bourgeoisie, and acute struggle between the socialist and capitalist roads leaves the final outcome undecided. To ensure ultimate success, the communist party has to take 'class struggle as its guiding principle'.[7] Because he wished to prevent capitalist restoration, Mao in his later years proclaimed the necessity of 'combating revisionism' and 'preventing revisionism'. Not only did he part company with the Soviet Union over its view that there could be 'peaceful coexistence' between the world's two social systems, because of his differences with other

leaders of the CCP, in 1966 he launched the Great Cultural Revolution to overthrow those in the party taking the capitalist road and to continue the revolution under a proletarian dictatorship.

The Cultural Revolution was the biggest mass campaign conducted by the CCP after 1949. For a long time, party and state organizations were paralysed, the masses were divided into opposing factions, extremism broke out in many localities; even the president, Liu Shaoqi, was persecuted and hounded to death. Lasting from 1966 until Mao's death in 1976, i.e. for ten years, the number of abnormal deaths in the country ran into millions. According to a government source: 'Because of the huge number of false accusations that led to unjust and erroneous cases, those persecuted or implicated numbered more than 100 million.'

In December 1978, the Central Committee of CCP held the Eleventh Plenum of the Third Congress. With the memory of the sufferings of the Cultural Revolution still painful, CCP leaders decided on a new start: to say farewell to the ideas and methods of class struggle of the Mao era. The plenum agreed to distance itself from 'class struggle as a guiding principle' and to endorse with full force the policy of opening to the outside world, and putting economic growth at the centre of the party's work. From that moment, China did not refer any more to class struggle, and the party no longer defined its aim as being the struggle for communism.

The People's Republic of China, 1976–2010

Stephen A. Smith

In the wake of the Tiananmen bloodshed in June 1989, there was widespread expectation that communism in China would go the way of communism in Eastern Europe. Deng Xiaoping had begun the process of economic reform ten years earlier, fostering elements of the market and opening China's economy to the outside world, but many experts insisted that the collapse of East European communism proved there could be no 'third way' between the command economy and the free market. Martin Malia, who correctly predicted in December 1989 that perestroika in the Soviet Union would fail, was typical: 'There is no third way between Leninism and the market, between Bolshevism and constitutional government. Marketization and democratization lead to the revival of civil society, and such a society requires the rule of law. Civil society under the rule of law is incompatible with the preservation of the lawless leading role of the Communist Party.'[8] At the very least, commentators claimed that political change was a condition of successful economic and social modernization. In the past thirty years, the PRC has confounded all these assumptions. The CCP, whose rule was more totalitarian than that of communist parties in Eastern Europe, has not only dismantled the

command economy but also presided over a transition from communism to capitalism in an exemplary demonstration of Hegel's cunning of history.

The magnitude of the CCP's achievement—its promotion of China to the status of a major economic and increasingly political power—cannot be gainsaid. Economic growth has been historically unprecedented. Since 1970 China's gross domestic product (GDP) has doubled every eight years so that her economy is now the world's second largest. She is the world's largest exporter of goods, the world's biggest recipient of fixed direct investment, and the world's largest holder of foreign exchange reserves. From the 1980s, the PRC government gradually put in place a model of investment-led and export-led growth through the privatization of state assets and the encouragement of private enterprise. This was partially in defiance of the then hegemonic Washington consensus, insofar as the state retained control over significant sectors of industry and finance, as well as control over capital flows, and insofar as privatization took place in an environment in which there was no developed legal system or, until recently, clearly defined property rights. The meteoric rise was fuelled by the outflow of impoverished labour from the countryside—in 2010 there were 240 million migrant workers in China—and by foreign investment which, from the 1990s, was attracted by low wages and by the vast potential of the Chinese market. Accumulation was intensified further by competition between local governments eager to see their regions prosper.

Economic reform began in the late 1970s in the countryside, where four-fifths of the population lived and where the entrepreneurial initiative of the peasants had been stifled by Maoist policies. Collective land was redistributed to individual households, which received use rights rather than full property rights, but were able to decide what to grow and to retain a share of profits. Some profits were invested in township and village enterprises, run by local governments or by private entrepreneurs. From the late 1980s some state-owned industrial enterprises were allowed to sell surplus products at unregulated prices, to hire and fire workers, and to retain a share of profits. Gradually these firms, along with local governments, were deprived of state funding and made to rely on their earnings or on loans from state banks. In the early 1990s, government policy shifted towards developing private enterprise, at first in the township and village enterprises (although these were already beginning to stagnate) and later in foreign-owned firms (based mainly in Hong Kong) that were located in special economic zones. Between 1995 and 2002, the share of industrial output produced in state enterprises fell from 64 to 30 per cent. A law of 1994 permitted the wholesale privatization of tens of thousands of antiquated state-owned enterprises and this led to the lay-off of 30 million workers. The dramatic fall in the number of workers was only slowly compensated by increased employment in domestically owned private companies, foreign companies, and overseas Chinese companies. Today the remaining state-owned enterprises tend to be large, profit-oriented enterprises in finance, energy, and communications, with a relatively highly skilled labour force. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, massive privatization, a free labour market, market-determined prices, and profitability as the criterion of success meant that the CCP had effectively completed a transition from socialism to capitalism.

A new capitalist class was formed of various elements. Senior party and state officials—or more commonly, their children, relatives, and friends—used their institutional resources and personal connections to invest in commercial, financial, and industrial enterprises. Whole bureaucracies, notably the People's Liberation Army, created giant corporations. Small state-owned enterprises that did not go bust generally ended up belonging to their former managers. Another crucial group were the overseas Chinese, who provided a large proportion of investment. At local level, officials, anxious to generate jobs and revenues, induced domestic and foreign entrepreneurs to invest in local businesses by providing tax exemptions, contracts, and loans. In turn, they benefited from bribes and a share of dividends. By 2008 the number of private entrepreneurs stood at over 150 million.

In 1980 Deng Xiaoping had declared that the 'purpose of socialism is to make the country rich and strong'. If the results of the policies he launched were hardly 'socialist', they did lead to a huge swathe of the population becoming better off. According to the World Bank, since 1980 the number of Chinese living on less than US$1 a day has dropped from around 600 million to below 180 million—an achievement without historic precedent. There has been a rapid growth of a 'middle class', although estimates of its size vary widely, as there is no agreed definition. If one looks to occupation, income and education, 160 million, or about 12 per cent of the population, are 'middle class', although this rises to about 23 per cent in the cities. Since the 1990s there has been a five fold increase in the number of college students, and educational qualifications are now a key mechanism of social stratification. The growth of the middle class has, in turn, powered the growth of a consumer society—symbolized in the ubiquitous shopping mall—although consumption still reflects the generally low standard of living, with mass acquisition having shifted from refrigerators, televisions, and washing machines in the 1980s to computers, personal stereos, air conditioners, and, for some, motor cars in the 2000s. China still has a long way to go before the standard of living of its people approaches Western standards: according to the most optimistic scenario, China's per capita GDP will still be only half that of the USA in 2030.

The astounding economic and social transformation has come at a price. Whereas in 1976 the PRC was one of the most equal societies in the world, today 10 per cent of the population owns 45 per cent of total income, while the poorest 10 per cent owns 1.4 per cent. Migrant workers toil in sweatshops and struggle to afford to send their children to school, while the offspring of the urban business class cannot find parking spaces on college campuses. Inequality, however, is as much a matter of huge regional disparities and the urban-rural divide. A distinctive feature of China's rise has been that the balance of the population has shifted from being rural to urban, again with unprecedented speed: the urban population doubled between 1996 and 2003. During the past thirty years, about 300 million peasants and their children have left the land to take up work in the manufacturing and service sectors. Yet this has exacerbated the disparity between rural and urban incomes: whereas the rural population has an average disposable income of US$898, the urban population has one of US$2,900.

Contrary to the predictions of many commentators, there is little evidence that the privatization of state assets, the provision of goods and services via the market, and

the opening of the country to the outside world have undermined the structures of CCP rule or eroded state capacity. The CCP, by far the largest political party in the world today, with 82.6 million members, remains authoritarian, but no longer totalitarian. It has shown an enormous capacity to adapt to social change while jealously protecting its monopoly of power. The Mao-era discourse of collectivism, egalitarianism, class struggle, and self-sacrifice has long vanished. The party has allowed society to open up, both internally—through greater economic freedom, consumer choice, and personal autonomy—and externally—through enhanced contact with the outside world. The party leadership has long ceased to be drawn from those who came to the cities with the People's Liberation Army in 1949, and is now based on the technocratic generation promoted in the 1980s by Deng Xiaoping. These technocrats are characterized overwhelmingly by their pragmatism. The CCP no longer attempts to justify its political role in terms of leading the country to socialism. General Secretary Jiang Zemin in 2000 outlined the party's role in terms of 'three representations': to represent the majority of the people's interests; to ensure that the economy expands; and to ensure that China becomes culturally advanced. The party-state retains immense capacity for repression—as shown in 1989, in the clampdown on the religious sect Falungong in 1999, and in regular human rights abuses—but in general it relies on regulation and on flexible, disciplinary forms of power. The state intrudes far less into people's lives than it once did. The political leadership reckons that continuing prosperity, combined with pragmatic nationalism (one that stresses China's 'peaceful rise' and does not fuel Western paranoia about the 'China threat'), represents its best chance of maintaining power and of ensuring the passive support of the Han majority.

The transition to the market has not fostered democracy, at least since 1989. The business class has a cosy relationship with the regime (in 2001 entrepreneurs were allowed to join the CCP), with businesses getting support and protection from officials in return for letting the latter have a slice of the cake. Central and provincial leaders have thus amassed wealth and perks and corruption is on a staggering scale. Hundreds of millions of citizens have benefited from the regime's prioritization of economic growth and many, not least in the younger generation, feel pride in a government that has permitted China finally to 'stand up' to the world, as Mao Zedong promised in 1949. This means that the 'middle class' is generally not pressing for political reform. Nevertheless elements of a civil society do exist in the form of extensive NGOs—campaigning on a range of social and environmental issues—and via the internet. In the virtual world, criticism of official corruption, injustice, inequality, environmental degradation, and government responses to crises such as HIV and earthquakes is rife.

China today is riven with social conflict. There is nationalist resistance to rule by Beijing in Tibet and Xinjiang. In the countryside farmers engage in bitter confrontation with officials over illegal land sales, corruption, arbitrary taxes, and selective law enforcement; yet collective action beyond the local level is rare and the demands of protestors are circumscribed. Inflation and rising food prices, along with corruption and flagrant disregard for the law, have led to strikes, protests, and riots. In 2010 it was

reckoned there were 180,000 'incidents' involving workers, especially younger ones. In addition, both peasants and workers now routinely have recourse to the law, in line with the official discourse of building a system based on 'rule by law'. It is doubtful, however, whether these challenges constitute a serious threat to the government, much as it worries about the possibility of the country descending into 'chaos' (*luan*). Its steps towards political reform have been limited—though regular elections of village officials are now well entrenched—but it has taken measures to buttress 'social harmony', by giving priority to Sun Yat-sen's principle of the 'people's livelihood'. Of late, for example, it has increased rural investment in roads, irrigation, schools, and environmental projects and in 2005 it abolished the 2,600-year-old tax on land. In industry the government has attempted to stem the chronic deterioration in working conditions by introducing laws to strengthen labour protection and job security and to enforce mediation in labour disputes.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, China is entering choppy economic waters. Premier Wen Jiabao told the People's Congress in 2007 that the economy was 'unstable, unbalanced, uncoordinated and ultimately unsustainable'. Growth is slowing, exports are weakening, the economy is vulnerable to the global economic crisis that erupted in 2008 because China underwrites so much US debt. More generally, the country is coming to the end of the phase of 'extensive growth', based on increasing inputs of capital and labour, and moving into a phase of 'intensive growth', based on raising skills and technological innovation. If over-investment is not to bring about stagnation, mass consumption must be boosted rapidly. Inflation, falling property prices, and local government indebtedness are also pressing problems. At present it seems that if any political reform is to come it is more likely to be propelled by declining economic performance and by conflict among rent-seeking elites than by popular pressure for democratic reform. Yet what looks like widespread support for the status quo is fragile. Many commentators, for example, remark upon the pervasive sense of 'aggrieved nationalism' in China today, and assume that it works in favour of the government. In late 2012 anti-Japanese demonstrations rocked the cities, triggered by Japanese nationalists who placed the Japanese flag on five rock-like, uninhabited islands: the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea. Bloggers were loud in proclaiming China's sovereignty over the islands and in protesting this insult to national dignity. However, one of them posed a question on Weibo, the Twitter-style social network: 'If your child were born on the Diaoyu Islands, what nationality would you pick for him or her: Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or the mainland?' The post went viral, re-tweeted more than 20,000 times in nine hours before being taken down by the censors. What is fascinating is that only 15 per cent chose the PRC. Around 40 per cent picked Taiwan, about 25 per cent Hong Kong, and 20 per cent Japan. As one tweeter explained: 'Sigh! I picked Taiwan, but in fact I love this country. It's just that I feel it doesn't love me.'[9] Doubtless, there are deep reserves of patriotic support on which the regime can draw, but the responses of these social media patriots reveal how thin, contradictory, and mutable much support for the regime is, and remind us that political change can come quickly and suddenly.

Notes

1. The Taiping Rebellion was a massive popular uprising against the Qing dynasty, concentrated mainly in southern China, which lasted from 1850 to 1864. It was led by Hong Xiuquan, who claimed to be the younger brother of Jesus. About 20 million people perished before the rebellion was suppressed.
2. The Hundred Days' Reform was a failed attempt by the young Guangxu emperor and various intellectuals to institute political, educational, and cultural reforms in 1898. The movement ended in a coup by conservatives backed by the dowager empress Cixi.
3. In the wake of the failure of the Chinese Republic, established in 1912, intellectuals such as Cai Yuanpei, Lu Xun, Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu (who went on to become the first chair of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921) came to believe that the root of China's ills lay in its Confucian tradition and called for the creation of a 'new culture' based on science and democracy.
4. See Kropotkin's 'The Russian Revolution and the Soviet Government: Letter to the Workers of Western Europe', 28 April 1919. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/kropotkin-peter/1910s/19_04_28.htm> (last accessed 24 August 2012).
5. In his essay of 27 December 1935, 'On Tactics of Japanese Imperialism', Mao Zedong argued for a united front policy against the purist, isolationist policy he called 'closed doorism'. 'What the revolutionary forces need today is to organize millions upon millions of the masses and move a mighty revolutionary army into action. The plain truth is that only a force of such magnitude can crush the Japanese imperialists and the traitors and collaborators.' 'Closed doorism', by contrast, 'just "drives the fish into deep waters and the sparrows into the thickets", and will drive the millions upon millions of the masses, this mighty army, over to the enemy's side' <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_11.htm>.
6. Mao Zedong, 'Reading Notes on the Soviet Text *Political Economy*' (1960–1) <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_64.htm>.
7. Mao Zedong, 'Speech at the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee' (24 September 1962)<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_63.htm>.
8. 'Z' (Martin Malia), 'To the Stalin Mausoleum', Daedalus, 119/1 (1990), 335–6.
9. Helen Gao, 'Diaoyu in Our Heart', *The Atlantic*, 22 August 2012.

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CHAPTER 13

COMMUNISM IN SOUTH EAST ASIA[1]

ANNA BELOGUROVA

> Marxism-Leninism cannot have national forms
>
> Soviet publication from 1980[2]

In South East Asia the Marxist message, originally intended to address issues of class, came primarily to address issues of nation-building in a region where nations did not exist prior to the twentieth century. The nation-state was the product of externally-induced and internally-generated forces of modernity. Relatively unified kingdoms had existed historically in Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia; but the key spur to nation-building derived from the fact that all countries in the region, with the exception of Thailand, came under colonial rule. Nation-states only came into existence, however, as a result of the decolonization that followed the Second World War. An entity such as Malaya, for example, was a federation of princely states under British rule that was neither politically nor ethnically homogeneous. It was the communist movement, mainly as it developed during the Second World War, that was critical not only in defining nationalist struggles politically—whether against the Western or Japanese colonizers—but also in articulating relations between ethnic groups not only in Malaya but in other new nations. Within traditional systems of tributary politics, such as were entrenched in Laos and Cambodia, complex hierarchies of ethnic groups existed. In Laos, for example, admittedly an extreme case, there were some sixty ethnic groups. The paradox of communism, an internationalist ideology par excellence, was that it served as midwife to ethnically homogenizing nation-states. At the same time, it served as an ideology that provided Western-trained intelligentsias and sometimes hereditary elites with a means to link their local political, economic, and social struggles to international developments and thus gain symbolic legitimation and material resources for their local concerns. It also promised the possibility that newly created nation-states might skip the capitalist stage of development. Yet one consequence of the role that communism played in forging nation-states in South East Asia was that after the Second World War, in Indochina, the 'elder brothers' of the communist movement in the region—China

and Vietnam—would vie for influence. In a bitter irony, by the 1970s, supposedly internationalist communist parties would end up going to war against one another: Vietnam and Cambodia entered into conflict from 1973, Vietnam eventually invading Cambodia in 1978; and China and pro-Soviet Vietnam would clash in 1979.[3]

In mainland South East Asia, the first communist organizations were created by Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants whose vision of communism in the region was shaped by the cultural ecumenes associated respectively with imperial China and with the tributary system dominated by the Vietnamese.[4] Early Chinese communists sought to emancipate all the oppressed peoples of what they called the Nanyang region, a term meaning 'southern seas', that was coterminous with the region of the Chinese diaspora in South East Asia. The fact that Vietnamese communists originally called their party the Indochinese Communist Party, reflected Vietnamese aspirations to retain their influence across the relatively borderless system they had dominated historically.[5] This issue of naming adumbrated post-war nationalist developments. The change of name from the Nanyang Communist Party to Malayan Communist Party (MCP) influenced the emergence of Malayan nationalism; similarly, the change of name from Indochinese to Vietnamese Communist Party helped articulate a sense of Vietnamese national identity. One result of this was that ethnic groups that had traditionally been subordinate within the tributary systems remained alienated from emergent communist movements, some allying with anti-Communist political forces, such as the Japanese in the case of Burma or Cambodia, or the Malays in the case of British Malaya, or the USA in the case of the Hmong , which allowed them to articulate their own vision of nationhood.

Communist organizations in South East Asia were shaped by older cultural traditions and patterns of association. In Vietnam millennarian tendencies within Buddhism shaped the implantation of communist ideas. In Cambodia communists used the dynastic name of Kampuchea to give focus to their national liberation struggle. Similarly, ingrained associational patterns of kinship and study circles shaped the early communist movement. The MCP, for example, functioned in many ways like an overseas association of Chinese in Malaya. More generally, communism performed a function similar to that which text-based religions played in the millennium up to the nineteenth century, when these religions helped to promote the integration of small scattered polities into the centralized and relatively homogeneous kingdoms of Burma, Thailand, and Vietnam.[6] In a similar fashion, communist activity and discourse helped to forge the diffuse social and ethnic groups that had once existed within the loosely bordered polities of the region into nation-states defined by a dominant ethnicity and by borders that had first been drawn by the European colonial powers.

Yet despite the congruence between traditional ecumenes and the broad early visions of the Chinese and Vietnamese communists, from the first the Comintern favoured 'national' parties. One of the Twenty-One Conditions laid down in 1920 for parties to become affiliates of the Comintern was that a party should bear the name of a country.[7] In 1930 the Nanyang Communist Party gave way to more 'national, parties, including the Communist Party of Indochina, led by Hồ Chí Minh, the Malayan Communist Party, and the Communist Party of Siam. A Taiwanese party was established in 1928,

which was destroyed by arrests in 1931–4; and a Philippines party was created in 1930, with a close connection to the Communist Party of the USA. In some colonies, communist parties had close ties with those in the metropole. In the Dutch East Indies, Tan Malaka's communist movement enjoyed the support of Dutch communists, and Hồ Chí Minh had backing from the French Communist Party. Yet this was not always the case: Japanese communists never truly supported the Taiwanese Communist Party, and British communists had no connections with the MCP. In addition, Hồ Chí Minh, the MCP, and the Taiwan Communist Party all complained that they received insufficient support from the Comintern.

The Origins: Communist Immigrant Networks in the Interwar Internationalist Moment

The Comintern did its best to control communist movements in South East Asia, but its ability to impose its will was limited by poor communications, insufficient financial and logistical support, interception of its directives by the authorities, and by periodic arrests of militants. Notorious in this respect was the raid in 1931 by the International Settlement police on the Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau in Shanghai, which was responsible for guiding the work of the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, Indochinese, Philippine, and Malayan communist parties. Finally, not least of the problems faced by the Comintern, was that its directives always had to be adapted by communist parties to domestic traditions and local circumstances.

Throughout Asia, the early communist movement used diasporic networks. The 'missionaries' of communism included Vietnamese in south China; Chinese in Japan, France, and Germany; Koreans in Russia; Japanese in the USA; and Indians in Burma.[8] These early networks had some affinities with global networks that were being developed at this time by such groups as Buddhists and Protestant missionaries, in that they internationalized a redemptive ideology at the same time as they indigenized it, using local and non-local cultural resources.[9] In a country such as Vietnam, communism vied with new forms of Confucianism and Buddhism that were also responses to the challenges of colonialism, that also promised national salvation, and that also operated in the modern public sphere.[10]

A certain Social Darwinist element crept into the discourse of the early communist movement, a sense that the Versailles peace settlement had entrenched the power of the 'fittest' nations and that the weakest were in danger of going to the wall. Communism presented itself as the key to ensuring the defeat of imperialism and the right of nations to determine their own future. At the same time, something of the same Social Darwinist spirit could be glimpsed in a communist tendency to perceive a hierarchy of nations or races. The Comintern organized Chinese worker unions in Russia in order

to awaken them from their 'Chinese passivity'.[11] Chinese communists saw the Malays as lacking 'national consciousness' and sought to move Malayan civilization to a higher stage by bringing Malays into the party. Similarly, at least until the 1950s, Laotian and Cambodian communists resented the attitudes of cultural superiority assumed by many Vietnamese within the Indochinese Communist Party.[12] Such attitudes were reminiscent of those that had structured tributary politics in earlier times.

Yet the visions of Chinese and Vietnamese communists in the interwar period helped shape the nations that emerged with decolonization after 1945. During the Second World War the communist parties played a key role in resistance to the Japanese and in so doing helped root in the populace an idea of the nation. The Chinese, whether oriented towards the Guomindang or the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)—and the two were in alliance during the Second World War—helped to propagate through their active participation in the anti-Japanese resistance a conception of the nation as an entity organized around a strong bureaucratic state with clearly defined borders. In general, communist understandings of nationhood proved more successful than less statist conceptions, such as ideas based on the Muslim community, the Malay *bangsa*, or ideas proffered by the millennarian religions such as Cao Dai and Hoa Hao in Vietnam, whose pan-Asianism caused them to side with Japan in the war against French colonial rule.

At the same time, while they were crucial in promoting nationalism, communist networks encouraged visions of a pan-regional, pan-Asian, or a global future. Such visions were not confined to Asia, as is evidenced by African immigrants in France and the USA who at the same time were contemplating the establishment of a Black International. In Paris, especially, different anti-colonial movements intersected: Hồ Chí Minh and Lamine Senghor established an Inter-Colonial Union in 1921, close to the French Communist Party. Such initiatives prepared the ground for post-1945 regional organizations, such as the Pan-African Congress.[13] They also facilitated the 'division of labour' agreed between Stalin and Liu Shaoqi in 1949, in which Stalin proposed that China take responsibility for promoting revolution in the East, while the Soviet Union would remain responsible for revolution in the West.[14]

The 1920s and 1930s: The First National Communist Parties

The first communist party organized in Asia was the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in 1920. It was also the earliest party to stage an armed rebellion—against Dutch colonial rule in 1926—and the first to be bloodily suppressed. Dutch communist Hendrick Sneevliet, who was active in the Dutch East Indies labour movement, was the godfather of the policy of the united front between 'nationalists' and 'communists' which he later persuaded the Comintern to apply in China. Typical of the first generation of locally produced communist leaders was Tan Malaka (1897–1949), who became chair of

the PKI in December 1921. As a Western-educated intellectual who trained as a teacher and worked periodically as a journalist, he typified the new breed of indigenous nationalist intellectual. His career exemplifies, too, the diasporic range of his revolutionary activities. Convinced as a young man that the Dutch East Indies must be freed through revolution, he trained as a teacher in the Netherlands, returning to Indonesia in 1919. He became active in the revolutionary movement in Sumatra and Java, where in 1920 he set up a people's school affiliated to the nationalist organization, Sarekat Islam. As a consequence of his revolutionary activism, he was deported to the Netherlands, where in 1922 he stood as a Communist Party candidate in parliamentary elections. By October 1922 he had arrived in Moscow, where he stayed for more than a year before being sent in December 1923 to Canton, as Comintern representative for South East Asia. By July 1925 he had moved to Manila, where he was in contact with the Progressive Workers' Party, thence on to Bangkok. Following the abortive uprising by the PKI in 1926, he fell out with them and founded a new party, the Partai Republik Indonesia. In August 1927 he returned to Manila, where he was arrested, an act that galvanized Filipino nationalists in protest. Following deportation to China, he seems to have dropped out of revolutionary activity for a few years, but by 1931 he was reportedly working once again for the Comintern, based in Shanghai. In 1942 Tan Malaka finally returned to Indonesia after Japan occupied the Malay peninsula. There he would acquire prestige as a brave opponent of collaboration with the Japanese and later of the reimposition of Dutch rule.[15]

Other revolutionary movements used diasporic networks similar to those used by Tan Malaka. The Vietnamese Communist Party originated in a 'frontier enclave', Canton, which was then the revolutionary base of the Guomindang and its Soviet advisers.[16] Hồ Chí Minh organized a communist youth group, Thanh Nien, in the city, while working together with Fu Daqing as an interpreter and an assistant of Mikhail Borodin, the Soviet adviser in the city. Fu Daqing, born in Jiangxi province, had become fluent in English at a missionary school and had been trained for three years at the University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow.[17] Ho and Fu would go on to found the MCP in 1930. After the collapse of the United Front in southern China in 1927, Hồ moved his networks back to Siam where they had been before the relocation to Canton in 1925. In Siam Chinese and Vietnamese networks intersected. After the formation of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930, Hồ Chí Minh lobbied to ensure that it remained under the Comintern bureau in Shanghai rather than under the Chinese-led Nanyang Party in Singapore.[18]

The Comintern relied on Chinese communist networks, as well as a network of seamen, for communication with the parties in South East Asia.[19] In the late 1920s, cells belonging to the CCP, consisting mainly of immigrants from Guangdong and Fujian, were created in many places throughout South East Asia including Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Phnom Penh.[20] In 1939, during the war against Japan, Zhou Enlai was able to use the newly established Southern Bureau of the CCP in Chongqing to build the anti-Japanese United Front among Chinese communists in South East Asia, partly using Comintern networks established in the 1930s. A similar network was that based on Indian migrants. Indian immigrants were the first communists in Burma,

which remained a province of British India until 1937. Between 1930 and 1938 Burma experienced a wave of student, worker, and peasant turbulence in the course of which the Dobama movement emerged to demand independence from British rule. Based largely on radical students, it was influenced by socialist ideas coming from India and from Burmese in London. It was out of this that the Burmese Communist Party (CPB) emerged in 1939, following the mass labour and students protests known as the '1300 revolution', 1300 being the year 1938, according to the Burmese calendar. Bengali intellectuals played a significant role in the formation of the party.[21]

The MCP, founded in 1930, exemplifies the centrality of transnational networks to the growth of communism in South East Asia. Chinese communists started to come to Malaya from the early 1920s and established the Nanyang Regional Committee of the CCP in 1926.[22] A key element in their discourse at this stage was an emphasis on overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*) as an oppressed people of the colonial world. This idea emanated from the time when Sun Yat-sen was seeking support from overseas Chinese and other Asian nationalists for his revolution against the Qing dynasty. The Chinese communists continued this theme, orienting to native-place organizations formed in the Chinese diaspora, yet promoting the idea of a unified Chinese nation. The CCP welcomed the creation of the MCP, seeing in it the continuing internationalization of the Chinese revolution and nationalism. For their part, however, Chinese leaders of the MCP saw the foundation of the MCP as an opportunity to establish autonomy from the CCP. In propagating an idea of a Malayan nation, generally referred to by its Chinese name of *malaiya minzu*, it helped embed the MCP in the local environment and transformed it into a vehicle of Malayan nationalism. In this it had some support from the Comintern, which wanted the MCP, based in Singapore, to become the hub of its network in South East Asia, a means to revive the PKI and to spread communist influence into India and Burma. In pushing the MCP to establish connections across the region, the Comintern fostered intraregional links of Chinese communist cells that were rather hybrid in character. As a result, by the outbreak of the war with Japan in 1937, when the Guomindang and the CCP re-established a united front, the CCP had at its disposal a network of connections, loose and incomplete to be sure, through which it could cooperate with the communist parties in South East Asia. All this serves to show how complex was the interplay between internationalism and nationalism in the region.

The Comintern, like the Guomindang and CCP in the late 1920s, encouraged the involvement of non-Chinese in the MCP. Yet up to the Second World War, the membership of the MCP barely exceeded 1500 and the number of Malays in the party was negligible, as was that of Indians. In Singapore, moreover, Chinese communists failed to connect with Indonesian communists who had escaped to Malaya from Dutch repression after the PKI was suppressed. In 1930, 20 per cent of its members were categorized as 'liberal businessmen', but it had also a significant number of shop and restaurant employees and servants in the houses of foreigners in its ranks. Under the British the party was illegal and its leaders were subject to periodic arrest and persecution. Nevertheless the MCP organized several strikes, notably at the Batu Arang coal mine in 1937.[23] In April 1939, Lai Teck, noted for his strong grasp of Marxist theory, became

general secretary of the MCP, but he was to be exposed in 1946 as a triple agent of the French, British, and Japanese.

To a certain extent, the rise of the MCP was influenced by Guomindang ideology. Around 1930, the Guomindang government intensified its propaganda towards Chinese overseas communities in order to counter attempts by the Japanese to extend their influence in South East Asia. This was a continuation of the policy of early nationalists in the late-Qing era to encourage overseas Chinese to identify with the fate of the motherland. As a result, a generation of locally born Chinese grew up who identified strongly with a Guomindang idea of *minzu* (the Chinese nation/race), even as they resented any attempt to subordinate their activities to the Nationalists in mainland China. Following the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, the Guomindang in Malaya and the MCP, along with other Chinese organizations, raised funds to support the Chinese war effort. The main such organization, the Anti-Enemy Backing Up Society, which was an MCP front, laimed about 40,000 members in 1939 and 200,000 in 1941, largely consisting of students. This was considerably greater than the membership of the MCP, which stood at only 1,000. This disparity was explained by the party leadership as a failure to lead the 'masses', but in part it was due to the policies of the MCP, which at the height of the popular protests in the fall of 1939 gave priority to anti-bourgeois and anti-British issues.

1940s: New States

Neither the Malayan, Indochinese, nor Burmese communist parties were a threat to the European colonial powers prior to the Second World War, but as a result of their resistance activities against the Japanese occupation they would become so. Following the Japanese invasion of South East Asia in late 1941, many Chinese joined guerrilla groups led by the communist parties, as in Malaya, where massacres of Chinese by the Japanese army merely intensified resistance. The MCP made peace with the British who armed and trained the guerrillas and communists became an important component of the 3,500-strong Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army.[24] In Burma communists played a major role in setting up the Anti-Fascist Organization, which was central to the resistance against the Japanese, although its role was downplayed by the Allies.[25] A section of Burmese nationalists, however, notably Aung San, who was at that time general secretary of the CPB, backed the Japanese as a counterweight to the British. In December 1941, Aung formed the Burma Independence Army which fought alongside the Japanese until 1945, when it joined with the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). On 27 March 1945, the army under General Aung San led a national uprising in which communists played a major part. In Vietnam, the Japanese occupation shattered the image of French military power and provided communists with a chance to capitalize on patriotic opposition to both the French and the Japanese. The Việt Minh, the communist-led coalition for national independence formed in 1941, capitalized on the

famine that broke out after the Japanese overthrew French puppet emperor, Bảo Đại, in 1944. They took the lead in distributing rice from granaries and thereby helped to win the confidence of village conservatives. In Vietnam, alone of the colonies, the communists and their allies had gathered enough military force to take power in 1945.[26]

After 1945, European colonial powers returned. Hồ Chí Minh and Sukarno declared their countries independent, but had to fight to oust the colonialists: the Vietnamese fighting the French until 1954, and the Indonesians fighting the Dutch until 1949. Burma and the Philippines were the only two new nations which obtained their independence by political means. Until 1946 communist parties maintained the policy of a united front with nationalists and sought to work in legal trade unions, but in that year all switched to armed uprisings. Communist revolts occurred in India, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines. As a result, the Cold War powers were drawn into the many local 'civil wars' of the region. It is tempting to think that this radicalization of communist policy must have emanated from Moscow. Yet no explicit instructions were issued by the Soviet Union.[27] It is true that Zhdanov's two-camp line, propounded in Calcutta in February–March 1948, legitimized local parties seeking to shift from a united front with bourgeois parties towards a 'united front from below', and this was used to legitimize the new policy of armed struggle.[28] Of all the parties, however, only the PKI explicitly sought advice from Moscow—and from Dutch communists—during the Madiun revolt of September 1948 against the newly elected republican government.[29] The radicalization of line was largely a matter of local parties responding to the changing domestic situation and then turning for outside ideological and material support. The communists turned to Moscow, whereas the anti-communist forces turned to the USA.

In Burma in February 1946, Thakin Soe, founder of the CPB and inspirer of the AFPFL, broke from the party, accusing it of 'Browderism', i.e. of endorsing constitutional methods to achieve national independence. Against a background of mass rallies and strikes—including one by the Rangoon police—the British governor offered Aung San and other AFPFL leaders seats in the Executive Council, which they accepted in September 1946. On 2 November the communists were expelled from the AFPFL for denouncing this as 'kneeling before imperialism'. In the elections to a constituent assembly in April 1947 Aung San and the socialists won a huge majority, while the communists fared badly. The assassination of Aung San and his cabinet colleagues on 19 July sent shock waves through Burmese society and strengthened the determination of the communists to revive a united front with the AFPFL. But radicals within the party had become convinced the British were out to sabotage any move to independence. In February 1948, a wave of strikes organized by the trade-union congress occurred in Rangoon alongside mass rallies by the All-Burma Peasant Organization at Pyinmana. It was in Pyinmana in March that a section of the CPB rose up in armed struggle after the government ordered the arrest of party leaders.[30]

In Malaya the MCP felt under extreme political pressure following the return of the British, as the latter proceeded to curb trade-union activity and clear communist-supporting squatters from the fringes of the jungle. After three uneasy years, the British declared a state of emergency in 1948, causing the communists to go back into the jungle. For individuals this choice represented a 'claim to liberation, meritocracy, and to

being modern' as well as a way of avoiding arrest.[31] The MCP justified its decision to prepare for armed revolt in June 1948 by invoking Zhdanov's two-camps line, but many in the party were unconvinced that conditions were ripe.[32] Malay hostility to the Chinese-dominated party had increased after the Chinese communists supported the aborted Malayan Union Plan of 1946–8.[33] Transnational networks continued to be operative, with the parties of China, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand assisting the MCP as it struggled—ultimately unsuccessfully—to defeat the British army.[34] In the Philippines, the USA had quickly granted independence in July 1946, but its imposition of controls on trade and its insistence on maintaining a military presence were unacceptable to the communist-led peasant insurgency known as the Hukbalahap. Deprived of seats in congress by more conservative nationalists, the Huks began an armed struggle which was not finally crushed until 1954. In 1950 the Communist Party had the support of over 10,000 people in central and southern Luzon. By 1958, there were just 500 Huks left and the Communist Party was outlawed.[35]

In the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, 1948 was also a year of a change. In 1945, the Vietnamese communists had risen to power with little bloodshed, by accommodating colonial elites, the bureaucracy, and local mass groups into the Việt Minh government. Although rivals in the Vietnamese Nationalist Party and the Vietnamese Revolutionary League, not to speak of Trotskyists, were purged, the communists made substantial concessions to their non-communist partners in the coalition government. After war broke out with France in December 1946, the French quickly re-established control of most towns. Hồ Chí Minh's efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement were rebuffed, so the Việt Minh prepared for a long fight. Strains built up inside the coalition in the course of 1947, and by early 1948 the party was looking beyond national independence towards socialism. It stepped up land reform in the north, but was more cautious in breaking with the united front than parties elsewhere. Only in 1950 did full civil war break out after the French- and US-led anti-communist camp concluded an agreement with Vietnamese Emperor Bảo Đại and established a state in South Vietnam. The Indochinese Communist Party secured support from China and the Soviet bloc.[36]

The Cold War of the 1950s–1960s

With the onset of the Cold War the fate of communist movements in South East Asia became even more determined by differing combinations of local conditions and global forces. The newly created nation-states of the region were anxious to keep the communist challenge at bay but at the same time had little enthusiasm to become directly involved in the bipolar struggle to contain communism. For their party, communist parties struggled against both independent nationalist governments and against attempts by the British and French to preserve their imperial influence in Malaya and Vietnam. The epic defeat of the French army by the Việt Minh at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 raised hopes that the communist revolution was on the rise globally, but it also firmed up US determination to roll back the communist menace. A further factor that influenced the

fortunes of the communists in South East Asia was the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, and its subsequent efforts to extend its influence across the region.[37] In 1949, the parties of Malaya, Indonesia, and Burma proposed to the CCP to organize a Cominform of the East, but Mao at that stage rejected the proposal because of the ongoing civil war in China.[38] In the course of the 1950s, however, the PRC did support communist insurgents with instructions, arms, and money. Chinese communities in South East Asia were, consequently, seen as a threat to national security by non-communist states, as well as to the economic success of native populations.

In April 1955 President Sukarno played host to the Bandung conference, an attempt by Indian and Indonesian leaders to produce a movement of peoples, mainly from the colonial world, that would be independent of Washington and Moscow. Sukarno famously advised the leaders of the twenty-nine Asian and African countries to view Asia through the glass of nationalism rather than of communism.[39] The PRC, in contrast to the Soviet Union, supported the Bandung conference in a bid to promote its image as benevolent patron of emerging nations. Despite the flirtation with non-alignment, it would not be long before it would denounce the Soviet Union for abandoning the struggle against US imperialism and briefly seek to take leadership of that struggle.

In 1951, following the dismemberment of the Indochinese Party, separate communist parties were formed in Cambodia and Laos, and communist influence in those countries began to grow. In Cambodia Khmer nationalism developed late, the first Khmer language newspaper only being published in 1936. The communist Khmer People's Revolution Party, led by former Buddhist monks, was based on the nationalist movement that had been formed in 1945 with the backing of Thailand, in order to fight the French colonial masters. After independence was granted by the French in November 1953, Prince Sihanouk struggled to prevent Cambodia from being dragged into the widening Vietnam conflict, despite an attempt on his life by President Diem of South Vietnam. Prince Sihanouk was far from sympathetic to communism, yet he recognized that the USA could not win the war in Vietnam and in 1965 allowed North Vietnam to set up bases in the east of the country. Heavily reliant on the goodwill of China, he allowed military supplies from China to reach Vietnam via Cambodian ports, but China proved a broken reed once the Cultural Revolution broke out in 1966. Sihanouk was ruthless in dealing with internal opponents, including the faction that became the Khmer Rouge, and failed to appreciate the threat posed by the latter's ultra-nationalism. From March 1967, Cambodia descended into civil war.[40]

The French had sponsored Lao national identity as a way of countering Thai influence in Laos. Although the French allowed limited self-government in 1949, Prince Suphānuvong, a member of the Indochinese Communist Party, allied with the communist Pathet Lao, meaning 'Lao Nation', upon its formation in 1950. As early as 1953, Laos was dragged into the Vietnam War when General Giap led Việt Minh troops into the north-east of the country as part of the fight against the French. When Laos gained full independence under the royal Lao government in 1953, the Pathet Lao continued to control two provinces adjacent to North Vietnam. War between the Pathet Lao and the government was to continue for two decades, and would involve the North Vietnamese and the US extensively, as well as Thailand, South Vietnam, and the Hmong minority.[41]

In Indonesia the PKI grew rapidly during the 1950s, gaining 16 per cent of the vote in the 1955 general election. It advocated a cautious policy on domestic issues and a strongly nationalist one on foreign issues. When in 1959 President Sukarno and the generally right-wing army leaders agreed to replace constitutional democracy with a populist-nationalist system of 'guided democracy', communist leaders acquiesced in it. The calculation seemed to pay off, since between 1959 and 1965, the Party's mass organizations—of youth, women, peasants, estate workers—grew to the point where by 1965, the PKI would claim 27 million supporters,[42] making it the largest communist party outside the socialist bloc. This growth, however, had been matched by that of Muslim and so-called secular-nationalist parties, and as the economy spiralled downwards, it led to increasing political tension. In 1965 a small group of military officers assassinated six generals and General Suharto accused the communists of masterminding this 'coup', if such it was. A bloodbath was unleashed in which at least half a million were killed either by the army or by Muslim and secular-nationalist vigilantes. In March 1966, as Suharto effectively supplanted Sukarno as head of state, the PKI was declared illegal.[43]

In Burma the military government, though hostile to communists, received Soviet aid and called itself 'socialist'. The AFPFL was in power for most of the period from 1948 to 1962, and though established by the CPB, it waged war against the communists, who were debilitated by splits between pro-Beijing and pro-Moscow wings and by separatist movements of minorities such as the Shan and Kachin. The AFPFL, though resolutely non-aligned and even pro-Chinese in its foreign policy (it shared a 1,000-mile border with China), proved acceptable to the USA because of its anti-communism. In 1961 Prime Minister U Nu, who had once been a Marxist, campaigned to make Theravada Buddhism the state religion in order to counter the influence of communists in rural communities.[44] He continued the earlier pattern of using international networks to promote national goals by sponsoring the Sixth Buddhist Council, 1954–6. Following a military coup in 1962, General Ne Win pursued a chauvinistic, semi-Buddhist 'Burmese Way to Socialism', which was viewed indulgently by Moscow in spite of its ongoing suppression of communist guerrillas.[45] By the late 1980s, the 'Burmese Way to Socialism' had brought the country to economic ruin. In July 1988, the new military government gunned down the so-called 8888 uprising of students, monks, ethnic minorities, workers, and farmers, claiming that it had been instigated by the communists. In fact, the role of the latter'—and that of the separatist movements with which they were allied—was marginal.

New Generation, New Insurgencies: 1960s–1970s

The decade of the 1960s was dominated by the escalating war in Vietnam. From 1959, the Việt Minh fought to reunite the country, by promoting the National Liberation

Front (NFL) in the South. The NLF carried out rent reduction and land redistribution in areas wrested from the control of the Saigon government, though after the US escalation of the war in 1965, villagers were driven from their homes and many of the reforms were undone. The NLF largely fought a guerrilla war against anti-communist forces, whereas in the North warfare was more conventional, with US and South Vietnamese forces relying on air superiority and overwhelming firepower. The massive bombing campaign gradually extended to Laos and Cambodia. Following the Tet Offensive in 1968, US ground forces began to be withdrawn, although fighting continued, even after the Paris Peace Accords of January 1973, until the fall of Saigon in 1975. One by-product of the Vietnamese victory was that the Khmer Rouge—in general no friend of the Vietnamese communists—took power in Cambodia in April 1975. In December of the same year, the People's Revolutionary Party in Laos ousted the king in a bloodless coup and installed a pro-Soviet, pro-Vietnamese regime with Prince Suphānuvong as president.

In the 1970s the generation that had been the founders of the communist parties began to pass away. Parties undergoing the transfer of power to a new generation of leaders often went through considerable ideological soul-searching. The Sino–Soviet split had divided communist parties across the region, with older parties in Burma, Thailand, and Indonesia tending to side with China. But 'Maoism' meant many different things in practice.[46] In the countries where communists were not in power, such as Thailand and Philippines, the new generation of leaders tended to favour an activist 'Maoist' policy based on rural insurgency. In the MCP splits appeared between the Revolutionary (1970) and Marxist Leninist factions (1974), which only reunited in 1983.

In Cambodia the first generation of pro-Vietnamese leaders was replaced by a younger generation of French-educated leaders such as Pol Pot, educated but without secure employment. In 1970 the Sihanouk regime was overthrown by General Lon Nol, who established a Khmer republic by orchestrating the massacre of thousands of Vietnamese residents. US bombing of Cambodia, which continued until 1973, drove many into the ranks of the Khmer Rouge. The latter espoused a hybrid of international communism and a status-conscious traditional culture, which has been characterized as a 'neo-dynastic internationalism'. According to Ben Kiernan, it was 'the exportable sacred language of a bilingual clerisy', who aimed to propagate nationalism among the masses,[47] and was a sharp challenge to Vietnamese cultural superiority. Its traditionalism was symbolized in the use of the dynastic name of Kampuchea to designate the country. Pol Pot carried out 'socialism in one country' to an extent that would have made Stalin blench. He broke off relations with socialist and capitalist states and classified the entire population in terms of class categories, policing their sexual lives and language. The genocide of 1975–9 targeted 'internal enemies', which included ethnic minorities, Muslims, and 'Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds'. Half the ethnic Chinese population perished, although China continued to support the Khmer Rouge after it was driven out of power by the Vietnamese invasion of 1979, It also suited the US and Thailand to support the Khmer Rouge as a counterbalance to Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge continuing to hold a seat in the United Nations until 1982.[48]

The 1980s and 1990s: Reform and Surrender

Today in South East Asia only two states remain socialist: Vietnam and Laos. The fall of the Soviet Union exacerbated Vietnam's economic problems, and in the same way as in the PRC, the government disbanded agricultural collectives, privatized much of the economy, and promoted export-oriented industry and integration into the world market. In those countries where communist movements had since the 1950s carried out a stubborn, costly, and ultimately futile struggle for power, many simply gave up as the communist bloc began to unravel. In 1982–3, Thailand's 'Maoists' experienced wide defections. In 1989, the MCP signed a peace treaty with the government, and now many veterans from the Emergency live peacefully in southern Thailand.[49] In 1994 Cambodia restored the monarchy. It would be rash to conclude that communism is now dead in the region but it is in dire straits. In the Philippines—where Asia's anti-colonial revolutions first began in the 1890s—communists continue to engage in war on the government and parliamentary politics. One of the country's communist parties, the Communist Party of the Philippines, established in 1968, calls itself Maoist, although it apparently advocates land reform, a mixed economy, and democratic pluralism. Yet a mark of just how low the fortunes of international communism have fallen came in December 2011 when the Chinese Communist Party announced that it was breaking off relations with the Communist Party of the Philippines because it is on the list of 'terrorist' organizations drawn up by the USA and the European Union.[50] The region that suffered so grievously from the USA's attempt to 'contain' communism militarily has seen communism duly contained, but ironically this came about more because of the collapse of faith of the communists themselves than because of US intervention.

Notes

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CHAPTER 14

COMMUNISM IN LATIN AMERICA

MIKE GONZALEZ

In the Wake of October

Rebellion and resistance have marked Latin America's existence since the first colonists set foot on the continent and imposed European visions on a reality whose origins lay in a very different past. In a sense, the centuries of colonialism, and the post-independence period that followed continued to be shaped by that confrontation between European perceptions and the buried traditions of the invisible Americas—Tahuantinsuyu, Anahuac, and the Maya and Mapuche worlds among others. And that same disjuncture would profoundly affect the reception and development of Marxism in Latin America and Brazil.

As was the case elsewhere in the world, the first communist parties were forged in the aftermath of the October Revolution of 1917 and the formation of the Comintern, which expressed both the internationalism of the Bolsheviks and the authority of the Russian party in the wider world. Thus the new parties defined themselves in relation to Russia. The success of a Bolshevik tradition which had overthrown tsarism and created the workers' democracy dreamed of by Marx, gave the Soviet communists an incontestable authority in the revolutionary movement worldwide. The new organizations represented a fusion of different traditions—syndicalist, anarchist, social democratic—all of which were divided over their attitude to Soviet Russia. The centrality of the working class as the subject of social transformation in the Marxist method meant that in Latin America, it was the countries with a significant working-class population and a political tradition in which they occupied a central place that saw the earliest communist formations. In Argentina syndicalism enjoyed a major influence, its ideas carried to the southern republic by the working-class immigrants of southern Europe. In Chile, it was the miners' unions, and the powerful influence of the undisputed leader of its workers' movement, Luis Emilio Recabarren, that provided the first communist cadres. In

Mexico, syndicalism had also won leading positions in the emerging trade unions in the mines, the factories of the centre, and the organizations of railway workers. In Cuba, the highly unionized tobacco workers were fertile ground for communist ideas. There was, of course, an alternative socialist tradition, led largely by intellectuals in the mould of Bernstein and the reformist wing of European social democracy, represented by Juan B. Justo's Socialist Party in Argentina, for example, and by the 'mutualist' tradition in the Mexican labour movement.

The inspiration offered by the October Revolution had other, unintended consequences. The authority it gave the leadership of the Comintern, with its Twenty-One Conditions of membership, left little room for discussion about how Marxism and communist practice might be adapted to the different reality of Latin America. Rather the Russian experience became *the* model to be followed, and its interpretation of Marxism the orthodoxy of the moment. The early expressions of revolutionary socialist thinking in Latin America reflect the optimism of the post-October years, just as they would later faithfully echo the twists and turns of a Comintern controlled by Stalin and dominated by Russian interests and its global alliances.

The earliest of the new organizations (formed in 1918) was the Argentine Communist Party (PCA), formed out of a group opposed to the pro-Alliance stance of the Radical Party government of the time, on the ground that the imperialism of the Allies had nothing positive to offer the working class. In Chile the communist party set up in 1922 and led by Recabarren boasted five daily newspapers and two (later five) members in Congress. In Brazil, the communist party recruited a number of members of the radical movement of non-commissioned army officers known as the 'Tenentes': one of them, Luís Carlos Prestes, would achieve almost mythical status in the failed rebellion of 1924 when he led his group of dissident soldiers out of São Paulo and into the Brazilian interior. Their subsequent 'long march', lasting four years, was essentially a guerrilla campaign whose key objective was survival.

It was significant, however, that the Comintern's earliest decision regarding Latin America was that it should fall under the regional leadership of North America, despite the presence of Latin Americans at the early meetings of the Communist International. This was early testimony to the fact that the Comintern saw Latin America as immature, both subjectively and objectively, as far as the conditions for revolution were concerned. Since European Marxism modelled its understanding of revolution on its own experience, it was an organized and growing working class that must lead the revolution. Although Lenin spoke of the dictatorship of workers and peasants, his conception of the latter derived from the small farmers of Central Europe rather than the largely indigenous rural poor of Latin America. Under Stalin this view would be made explicit and used to legitimate the subordination of what we now call the Global South to the unquestioned leadership of the Comintern.

The Russian example nevertheless had a considerable impact throughout Latin America, and significant emphasis was laid on the differences between the Mexican Revolution of 1910–17, Latin America's first social revolution of the twentieth century, and the Russian Revolution. The Mexican Constitution of 1917, for example, was the

founding document of a bourgeois state, emphasizing national cohesion and control of its natural resources; it showed no influence at all of Marxist ideas nor did it give any leading role to the working class. The Russian Revolution, by contrast, was a workers' revolution centrally informed by Marxism. It was the weakness of the socialist tradition in Mexico, for example, that enabled President Carranza to mobilize the 'red battalions' of workers against the Zapatista rebellion in 1915.

Indo-America

Marxism did not have the field to itself in the early 1920s. And nor were the communist parties the only organizations to respond to the revolutionary wave that briefly followed the October Revolution. The old system of export and plantation agriculture and the cultural repression of the old regimes were encountering other forms of resistance. The indigenous rebellions of the 1920s raised important issues for revolutionaries as to how they should relate to the Indian communities. European Marxism had nothing to offer in this regard, other than to see these uprisings as manifestations of the backwardness of these societies and their unpreparedness for a proletarian revolution. One response was what came to be called 'Indo-Americanism'—a strange and eclectic theory developed by Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre through his Peruvian APRA (Latin American Popular Revolutionary Alliance) organization which argued that Latin America was an exception to the European model and that its future path must lead through development to a future revolution, but that en route it should ally with some imperialisms but not others. The dynamic founder of the Cuban Communist Party, Julio Antonio Mella, denounced APRA's politics in a pamphlet called '¿Qué es el Arpa?' (a play on the organization's name, since *arpa* means harp) as populist, confused, and calling for revolution in stages with no end in view.

It was in response to Haya de la Torre's project that the most creative and original response came from the neglected and extraordinary Marxist thinker José Carlos Mariátegui. Mariátegui, a radical journalist and activist, was in Europe in the early 1920s, having been expelled by the then president of Peru. He attended the founding conference of the Italian Communist Party at Livorno in 1921, and he may also have been present at meetings of the International. His newspaper columns of that time (in *Figuras y aspectos de la Vida Mundial*) recount his meetings with a wide variety of the international Left and his activities on his return to Lima are testimony to his understanding of the marriage of theory and practice at the heart of Marxism. He founded the Peruvian Labour Congress (CGTP) in 1929 and the Peruvian Socialist Party in 1928. At the same time as editing workers newspapers, he set up a journal whose impact was continental. Looking back now at the run of *Amauta*, founded in 1926 (its name derives from the intellectuals and philosophers of the Inca world), it is breathtaking in its range of contributions, topics, and genres. It represents a point of encounter between progressive European intellectuals and the socialist and revolutionary thinkers of Latin

America. Its political foundation was an extremely sophisticated understanding of the strategy of the 'united front' whose starting point was a recognition of the specificity of Latin America in the framework of Marxism. His reluctance, despite enormous pressure from some of his comrades, to form a Peruvian *communist* party—and to persist with the Peruvian Socialist Party he founded in 1928—proved to be remarkably prescient. Although he was already too ill to attend its first meeting, or indeed the key meeting of the Latin American parties in the Comintern in Montevideo a year later, the rejection of his positions left the road free for the disastrous politics of the 'third period'.

The division within the anti-imperialist camp was exemplified in Central America. In Nicaragua, the movement led by Augusto César Sandino against the occupying US military forces enjoyed a level of support much greater than its tiny numbers. In 1932 Sandino rejected the imposition of Anastasio Somoza, a loyal friend of Washington, to the presidency and continued his rebellion until he was murdered by the newly appointed president. During the early phase of his rebellion (1928 to 1930), his secretary was a Salvadorean communist, Agustín Farabundo Martí. Their relationship ended acrimoniously, with Martí returning to lead the Salvadorean Communist Party, founded in 1930. The list of visitors and supporters commemorated in the Sandino Museum in his home village of Niquinohomo includes a number of prominent members of Haya's APRA organization, who clearly distanced the Nicaraguan revolutionary from communist ideas. In El Salvador, meanwhile, Martí organized the first mass peasant uprising in January 1932. This was betrayed, Marti was executed, and the rebellion was brutally crushed, becoming known as 'La Matanza'—the Massacre. Although those involved, such as the legendary union leader Miguel Mármol, insist that the rising was organized without Comintern involvement, the decision was clearly influenced by the so-called 'third period' strategy of the Comintern, which was characterized by the denunciation of non-revolutionary currents and the self-isolation of the communist parties. This line had been laid down at the 1929 meeting of Latin American communist parties in Montevideo. In Peru the new line led to the abandonment of Mariátegui's strategy of unity across the movement, to attacks on bourgeois parties, and to the encouragement of separate indigenous republics. The nefarious Eudocio Ravines, who founded the Peruvian Communist Party on Comintern instructions in 1930, denounced Haya de la Torre as an 'Apro-fascist'.

A Historic Reversal

In December 1934, a group of leading figures from the Comintern arrived in Brazil to argue for an immediate insurrection on the basis of the International's global strategy. Chosen to lead it was Luís Carlos Prestes, the legendary leader of the Prestes Column of 1924–6. He had taken refuge in Bolivia and later travelled to Moscow, where he joined the Communist Party. The 1935 rising, although described as a mass movement, was effectively a movement of military officers. It was claimed later that the party leaders

had expected middle-class support—but that was unlikely against the background of the dictatorship of Getulio Vargas that had refloated the economy, albeit under harshly repressive conditions. The rising failed and the state's vengeance was violent and vindictive—Prestes's German-born wife, for example, was handed over to the Gestapo. The contradictions at the heart of the 1935 rising derived from changes at the heart of the Comintern, rather than any close observation of Brazilian conditions. By then, the isolation of the communists that derived from the 'third period' gave way to its reverse. The 'popular front' advocated the widest possible alliances in the fight against fascism—reflecting, of course, Stalin's search for alliance with the West to hold off the threatened Nazi incursion into a Russia still unprepared for invasion.

The highest price for the popular front policy was paid in Spain, where the cost of the West's (highly questionable) 'non-intervention' in the civil war was the betrayal of the mass anti-fascist resistance there. In demonstrating its commitment to bourgeois democracy, the Stalinist regime undermined the mass revolutionary struggles across the world. In Latin America this led to enthusiastic support for nationalist and national-democratic regimes for which the communist parties provided a convenient Left cover. In Mexico, the populist regime of Lázaro Cárdenas, having earlier earned the 'social fascist' label, now enjoyed vocal communist backing. The return of the exiled Muralists—Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros—marked the new atmosphere, as did the rise to prominence of Vicente Lombardo Toledano, whose dominant influence in the Mexican labour movement presented an obstacle to the communists in subsequent decades, even though they vigorously promoted him during the popular front period. Within the Mexican Communist Party itself, however, an ideological battle ensued between those supporting the popular front line with special vigour, and those who maintained a more critical stance towards Cárdenas.

Stalin was alert to the arrival of Leon Trotsky in Mexico in 1937, invited by Rivera (who later broke with him over his relationship with his wife, Frida Kahlo). Trotsky's decade of exile and persecution by Stalin's agents did not end when he arrived in Mexico, and it extended to all those who supported him. No less a person than Siqueiros led the first armed assault on Trotsky's Mexico City home, before he was finally murdered in 1940 by Ramon Mercader, a Stalinist agent. Trotsky represented the revolutionary internationalist tradition that Stalin had long since abandoned, in favour of using the world's communist parties essentially as agents of Soviet foreign policy.

The US Communist Party continued to act as a kind of regional overseer of the communist parties of Latin America, and the pronouncements of its general secretary, Earl Browder, were seen to be authoritative. Thus when the US entered the Second World War in the wake of Pearl Harbor, Browder declared that 'Communism is Americanism' and offered to dissolve the party into a broad alliance with President Roosevelt. War, it may be said, produces some strange allies—and nowhere stranger than in Latin America. In Cuba, for example, the communist party entered into a political alliance with Fulgencio Batista which held until 1948. In Chile, the ex-dictator Carlos Ibáñez was now courted, despite his recently expressed sympathies for Nazism. In Nicaragua the Communist Party was founded in 1943 at a rally overlooked by a massive portrait

of Somoza. And in the Chilean presidential elections of 1946, the Communists aligned with the Radical Party against the Socialist Party and the Anarchists and supported González Videla—indeed they went so far as to organize terror squads to attack members of the other Left groups. When, a year later, the Communist Party was banned by its erstwhile allies, it found few friends to defend it.

In Argentina, the dominance of Victorio Codovilla over the Communist Party ensured a degree of continuity, though there were frequent internal challenges. The key one, however, came from outside the party, with the rise of Juan Domingo Perón as a force, particularly in the labour and trade union movements. The Stalin–Hitler pact of 1939 led to the usual volte-face in the Argentine party, which briefly expressed support for a Nazism to which Perón was seen as being sympathetic. When the policy turned back in 1941, the PCA obediently proclaimed its support for the Allied cause, renewing its criticism of Perón's pro-Axis posture. In reality Perón's position was less obviously pro-fascist and more pragmatically nationalist—but Washington ensured that the label stuck. For Argentine communists, who were losing the battle for hegemony in the labour movement, Perón continued to be seen as the main enemy.

In Colombia, the rise to power of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, charismatic leader of the Liberal Party, posed a major challenge to the communist party. The politics of the third period had isolated it from many of the emerging labour struggles, despite its leading role in the emblematic banana workers' strike of 1928. The leftward-moving liberals achieved a leading position in most working-class organizations, and Gaitán's attacks on the old oligarchy ensured that they would retain a central role in national politics, especially after his murder in 1948 and the subsequent civic rising called the 'Bogotazo'. It is generally agreed that the Communist Party played little or no part in the Bogotazo or in the pact between Liberals and Conservatives to share power that ensued. Nor were they in a position to organize the defence of the people in the fourteen years of violence and repression that followed—200,000 people or more died in the social conflict known simply as 'La Violencia'. When the big landowners began to expel the peasants from their land, the peasantry responded with armed resistance. The so-called Republic of Marquetalia was its high point, a liberated territory under direct peasant control. The Communist Party regained its influence in these enclaves, and by the late 1950s was organizing the brigades that would form in the 1960s into the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (the FARC) under their legendary leader Manuel Marulanda or 'Sureshot' ('Tirofijo') as he was known. In Guatemala, the Communist Party also won influence among the peasantry, but in the context of the wartime united front supported the reforming and modernizing president Juan José Arévalo and his successor, Jacobo Arbenz. It was somehow inevitable that Arbenz's attempt to enact an agrarian reform aimed principally at the immense holdings of the United Fruit Company should produce a violent reaction. The legalization of the Guatemalan Labour Party (PGT—the name the communist party assumed) provided the excuse. In June 1954 Arbenz was overthrown in a CIA/FBI engineered military coup, and the PGT was banned and persecuted.

With the exception of the Colombian Communist Party, the communist parties of Latin America repeated the policies prevailing across the international communist movement in the post-war era. Whether explicitly or not, the common strategy was one of seeking alliances with reformist and nationalist organizations in electoral coalitions—the leading example in this respect being Chile, where the Socialist Party leader Salvador Allende was the presidential candidate of a series of coalitions, embracing the Communist Party of Chile and culminating in the Popular Unity coalition elected to government in 1970. In Argentina, the Communist Party was largely marginalized by the influence of Perónism, which dominated the trade union movement and the political imaginary. The Cold War ended the short-lived access of communists to the corridors of power, and in pursuing the policy of broad alliances with populist and nationalist parties under the banner of national unity, the communist parties were pursuing a policy of self-protection. One result of this trajectory was the discrediting of the communist tradition among a new layer of radical anti-imperialist youth. In Cuba, for example, young revolutionaries were drawn by the traditions represented by the Directorio Revolucionario, formed during the political crises of the 1930s with a revolutionary nationalist perspective. A similar vision motivated the younger sections of the Cuban Nationalist 'Auténticos' and the splits from it, particularly the 'Ortodoxos' led by popular radio presenter Eddy Chibas. The group around him included a young lawyer, Fidel Castro. The communist party could offer no alternative, given its collusion with Batista. So it was a politics of armed struggle that came to prevail among these sections, especially after the coup engineered by Batista in advance of the 1952 elections. The Trotskyist movement, with the exception of Bolivia, did not represent an alternative for these new radicals. The persecutions of Stalinism had ensured that the representatives of Trotsky's legacy would remain marginal and fragmented. The small Trotskyist organizations formally held to Trotsky's concept of 'permanent revolution' which argued that the struggle for democratic tasks must be led by the working class if it is to develop into a struggle for socialism. But they too were constrained by the dominance of populism and the difficulties of labour organization. In Argentina Nahuel Moreno (the most prominent follower of the influential early Trotskyist leader Liborio Justo or 'Quebracho') dissolved his organization into Perónism, and Guillermo Lora, a leading Bolivian Trotskyist, adopted a similar position in relation to the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), the nationalist party. The Bolivian Revolution of 1952 was led by the miners' union, where the influence of Trotsky was expressed in the principal revolutionary document of modern Bolivia, the Pulacayo Theses of 1946. But though led by the working class, the revolution culminated in the surrender of leadership to an MNR whose radical discourse was very soon attenuated.

The late 1950s were a period of growing anti-imperialist agitation. The youth-led demonstrations that greeted Richard Nixon wherever he went in Latin America on his continental tour of 1958 were testimony to the radicalization of a new generation benefiting from mass education and the beginnings of modernization. There was social agitation everywhere. In Mexico the doctors', teachers', and railway workers' strikes had national resonance, and showed the Communist Party in the leadership of all three. Yet

at no point was working-class militancy attached to a concept of social revolution by the party.

Enter the Guerrillas in Olive Green

Meanwhile events in Cuba would transform the debate among socialists and revolutionaries about how to achieve a social revolution. The Cuban Revolution, which ended the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista on 1 January 1959, was not led by the working class nor were its leading ideas in the tradition of the October Revolution. Its leader, Fidel Castro, came from a revolutionary nationalist background, and was deeply suspicious of a communist party which had served as the satrap of imperialism. On 26 July 1953 he led an attack on the Moncada barracks which was met by Batista's troops; Castro was arrested and imprisoned before being released into exile in Mexico three years later. His famous speech from the dock, 'History will absolve me', advocated a politics of national liberation based on a broad alliance of anti-imperialist and nationalist forces. In Mexico he actively prepared the guerrilla incursion which was launched when a force of eighty-two men landed in Cuba from the motor vessel *Granma* in December 1956. He was backed by a range of nationalist and anti-Batista forces outside the island, and by internal groups who shared his antipathy for the communist party—together they formed the 26 July Movement. His most famous travelling companion, however, was an Argentine—Ernesto 'Che' Guevara—who would become the continental symbol of a new concept of revolution.

Guevara had been present, though not directly involved, when Jacobo Arbenz was overthrown in Guatemala. He had moved on to Mexico City where he met and was deeply impressed by Castro. Guevara's background in an Argentina where the Communist Party had played a conservative role and where working-class politics were identified with Peronism, certainly predisposed him to sympathize with Castro's vision of revolution which did not embrace a concept of working-class agency. Instead he saw the protagonists of revolution as the revolutionaries themselves, supported and sustained by the peasantry. The significant element here was what may be described as 'voluntarism'—a very specific response to the gradualist concept of a revolution by stages sustained by the pro-Soviet communist parties. The will of the revolutionary, his determination and commitment could, in Guevara's view, carry the revolution forward irrespective of 'objective conditions'.

The impact of the Cuban Revolution across Latin America was instant and dramatic. It was evidence that the imperialist giant had feet of clay, that even the most obdurate US-backed dictatorships were vulnerable. The rising mass discontent, especially among youth and students, had made itself very evident in the anti-US demonstrations of the previous two years. The response from Washington was not conciliatory; within a year, an economic embargo on Cuba had been put in place which has lasted, with slight variations, to the present.

Cuba itself was not strategically important for the USA; but it was enormously significant symbolically and, to a lesser extent, economically. To all intents and purposes, Cuba had been an economic colony since the war of independence from Spain in 1898 cast it straight into the embrace of a Washington whose interest, for all the rhetoric, was economic—specifically, Cuba's sugar industry. The island would later become a market for US goods (witness the elderly Cadillacs that still circulate in the Havana streets, thanks to local ingenuity and a great deal of wire), and a venue for burgeoning sex tourism in the 1930s, as well as a convenient laundering conduit for the illegal proceeds of the alcohol trade during Prohibition. The virulent anti-imperialism of most Cubans was therefore entirely justified.

But Latin America was in ferment before the revolution, and the real significance of Cuba was understood in the framework of Walt Rostow's 'domino theory', which dominated US foreign policy thinking at that point. Whatever the traditions of struggle that had marked the previous decades, revolution for the generation of 1959 was inextricably interwoven with Cuba, and with a guerrilla war whose victory was in fact attributable to a complex of causes. The internal collapse of his regime, the rising urban movement that had mobilized against Batista's abuses of human rights, and the growing unease with his corruption and violence amongst some sections of the US administration were barely discussed. Instead, the 'heroic guerrilla' became the determining figure in the story that was told. The concept of mass struggle, let alone the agency of the working class, did not figure in the narrative of revolution. Instead the heroes of this story were for the most part middle-class revolutionaries, intellectuals, students and a very few peasants and workers. And across Latin America, the new vision of revolution—in which social change would occur *after* the revolution, and be introduced by the victorious revolutionaries—dominated political debate among a restless youth that had no political relationship with workers or peasants. They were largely members of a first generation of urban migrants and by and large came to the concept of guerrilla war from populist or bourgeois nationalist organizations. Yet their commitment was profound and their anger at injustice and their yearning for change, sincere. The Cuban experience seemed to offer the possibility of a short cut to change which would avoid the compromises and delays so characteristic of the broad organizations they had joined.

The potential leaders of the new radical movements travelled to Cuba for instruction and guidance, and returned to their individual countries with a blueprint for struggle based on the rural guerrilla group (the *foco*) and Guevara's theories of guerrilla warfare. It was a concept of revolutionary *action*, as opposed to the inaction of the trade union bureaucrats and communist leaders whose tactics were always still subject to Soviet foreign policy priorities based on the policy of peaceful coexistence. Like Castro himself, they were essentially revolutionary nationalists for whom the objective was national liberation. But it was also a native movement, whose strategies, in those first two years, responded to the Latin American experience of imperialism. Some groups named themselves very consciously after iconic indigenous figures, like the leaders of the late-eighteenth-century indigenous rebellions, Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari. The spread of guerrilla strategies bypassed the region's communist parties who were openly

suspicious of the origins of the guerrilla fighters themselves, of their voluntarism, and of their lack of political clarity or perhaps of political pragmatism. But this was precisely their attraction for the new young revolutionaries. Yet within a very few years, the majority of them were dead or imprisoned, by regimes who had also learned from the Cuban experience. The future leaders of the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua trained in Cuba and launched the predecessor of the Sandinista National Liberation Front upon their return in 1961. Their principal leader, Carlos Fonseca, was killed in 1967. In Peru, the guerrilla movement was crushed by 1965. In Paraguay the future guerrilla *foco* was intercepted at the Argentina border and massacred. In Uruguay Raúl Sendic's Tupamaros, an urban guerrilla movement born out of his experience with the sugar plantation workers of the interior, had widespread support and deep implantation in many areas of Uruguayan society and this ensured its survival until the vicious campaign of repression launched by José María Bordaberry in 1973.

After two years, the strategy which Cuba encouraged by example and by direct involvement in the preparation of other Latin American guerrillas entered an uncomfortable marriage with a communist tradition which was extremely hostile to the concept of armed struggle. In August 1961, Fidel Castro announced that the Cuban Revolution was 'Marxist-Leninist', i.e. that it was now a socialist revolution. This represented a rapprochement with a Cuban communist party which had denounced the 'petit-bourgeois adventurism' of the 26 July Movement. Fidel's first actions on assuming power in January 1959 had in fact been directed at challenging communist influence in the trade unions and elsewhere. However, any concept of socialist revolution as 'the self-emancipation of the working classes' was clearly discounted in the structures of the new state, which emulated the military chains of command that had evolved in the sierra.

The decision of August 1961 was, as Fidel's actions so often were, a pragmatic response to external events. In April 1961, armed detachments landed at the Bay of Pigs (*Playa Girón*) with the clear if not open support of President Kennedy. Their aim was to emulate Fidel's own campaign and destroy the new Cuban state. Instead they were quickly defeated and a number of the insurgents killed or imprisoned; the popular response, probably unanticipated, had dealt a rapid and definitive blow against them. At the same time, the economic embargo was starting to bite. The hope that Cuba's new independence might be recognized in Washington was faint even before the Bay of Pigs, and clearly impossible afterwards. Cuba's extreme economic dependence on the US, its sole customer for sugar, left it fragile and exposed in the face of the US trade embargo. The internal debates about the economy, principally between Fidel and his Russian advisers on the one hand, and Che Guevara, now head of the National Bank, on the other, focused on whether Cuba should continue to be a mono-producer or diversify its economy and industrialize as soon as possible. The debates were resolved in favour of continuing large-scale sugar production, largely because of Cuba's absolute reliance on Soviet economic support for its survival.

The discovery of Soviet missiles on the island in October 1962 produced a US–Soviet confrontation that ended with the withdrawal of the missiles and an agreement between Kennedy and Khrushchev to dismantle military bases in Turkey and Cuba respectively.

Castro and Guevara reacted furiously, believing themselves to have been used as pawns in an international game. Their response was to re-emphasize the guerrilla strategy as a method that was internationalist and specifically Third Worldist. Thus began the brief Guevarist phase that defined Cuba's image among the emerging anti-Stalinist Western Left. Its voice was Regis Debray, whose *Revolution in the Revolution*, written with the support of Fidel, re-emphasized and celebrated the concept of the revolutionary force as a substitute for a mass movement. This phase lasted until 1967—it was the period of the Tricontinental Conference and the founding of the Organization of Third World Solidarity (OLAAAS) in Havana in January 1966—and it was marked by a fluctuating relationship with the Cuban communist party and the Soviet Union. The attacks on Aníbal Escalante, the leader of the Popular Socialist Party, as the Cuban communist party was then known, led to his exile to Moscow in 1962 (he would be denounced again in 1968 as leader of an anti-Castro 'microfaction'). It was a defiant signal from Castro to Moscow. Yet by 1965, the Cuban state was again deferring to the Soviet planners whose influence, at once political and economic, was growing.

The death of Guevara in Bolivia in October 1967 signalled the end of the independent strategy. In many ways Guevara's decision to pursue the Bolivian option illustrated both the depth of his personal commitment to the revolution and the limitation of the strategy to which his name is attached. The initial plan had been to build a new guerrilla force in Venezuela, where a base for it had already been established by Douglas Bravo from the end of the 1950s. The disagreement within the Communist Party over strategy led to Bravo's expulsion in 1966 (he formed the PRV, the Party of the Venezuelan Revolution, shortly afterwards) and the explicit rejection by the Venezuelan Communist Party of the Cuban proposal. Guevara himself was by then involved in what proved to be an ill-judged campaign in the Congo, having resigned all his responsibilities and left Cuba to pursue the armed struggle. He returned secretly to Cuba and from there moved to Bolivia. It was a curious decision; a recent populist agrarian reform there meant that peasant support for the guerrillas would be hard to win. The continuing workers' struggles, particularly in the mines, were led by Trotskyists, and they remained the epicentre of class struggle in the country. Yet Che's *Bolivian Diary* barely mentions the miners, except insofar as a handful joined his small guerrilla force. More importantly, even though he saw a possibility in Bolivia of building a central base for a wider struggle, particularly in Argentina, this was never based on an assessment of the mass struggles. The defining element may well have been the encouragement given to the plan by the Bolivian Communist Party, though this seems to have had more to do with an internal struggle in the party than with any serious reorientation towards armed struggle.

An Ambush on the Chilean Road

In any event, Che's tragic death at La Higuera, under the watchful eye of two CIA operatives, marked an ending of the guerrilla phase. Regis Debray, who had gone to Bolivia,

been arrested and jailed and finally released, went on to Chile where he interviewed the presidential candidate of the Popular Unity coalition, Salvador Allende, shortly before the 1970 elections. Popular Unity was a coalition of six parties, including the Communist and Socialist parties, with a significant mass base, and several splits from the Christian Democratic Party whose six years in government had exposed the limitations of their programme of reform. While there were serious divergences within the Socialist Party, the enthusiasm for Allende on the Chilean Left was general—though the main Guevarist organization, the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left), remained outside the coalition. His electoral victory, though without an absolute majority, was described as the beginning of the 'Chilean road to socialism', and set in motion a widespread debate over the possibilities of achieving socialism through parliament. In this the Chilean Communist Party was his most enthusiastic ally.

Popular Unity's victory lent new credibility to the concept of a parliamentary road—paradoxically, perhaps, it entered an ideological space left by the failure of the guerrilla strategies, and generated a new optimism about the possibility of peaceful transition through the ballot box. The major parties of the Left in Chile were genuine mass organizations with serious implantation in the trade unions, and the atmosphere was radical—the student movement, land occupations (rural and urban), and a growing number of strikes were signs of the reasons for Allende's victory. Nevertheless, the Chilean parliament was still controlled by the Right and was consciously used to block and delay reforming legislation. At the same time, grass-roots activism intensified, encouraged by Allende's victory. The visit of Fidel Castro in November 1971 was seen as a clear endorsement of the electoral strategy—and by the Right, as an opportunity to denounce Popular Unity. The bourgeoisie demonstrated by banging empty pots to protest against shortages which were in fact the result of a deliberate hoarding of goods. The tensions in the situation were quick to emerge. In October 1972 a strike against the government led by the lorry owners' organization (under the influence of an extreme right-wing group) failed because of the large-scale mobilization of workers, students, peasants, and their families. New organs of struggle, the *cordones*, prefigured forms of organization which moved the initiative from a government increasingly paralysed by its dedication to institutional rules which were used systematically to cripple and contain its proposals, to inclusive and democratic grass-roots organizations embracing workers, neighbourhood organizations, and local farmers among others.

By early 1973, the largest party of the Right, the Christian Democrats, was openly discussing strategies to bring the government down, offering alternative economic and military options. The extraordinary thing was that Allende persisted in defending a prevailing legality which was manipulated by the Right. The rank and file, particularly in the working-class and poor urban districts, were increasingly restless; but Allende repeatedly called on them to observe the rules of parliamentary democracy. The internal debates within and around Popular Unity became increasingly bitter, especially after the attempted coup by the tank regiment on 29 June 1973 which was almost certainly a 'dry run' for the coup to come. In August the lorry drivers launched another strike, and the response from the supporters of Popular Unity was once again militant and widespread.

When Allende called on the army to restore order, and specifically charged Augusto Pinochet with the task, however, the conditions were prepared for the brutal coup of 11 September—and Allende's death in the presidential palace.

In the same year as Pinochet's coup, the ruling classes of Uruguay, long celebrated as the Switzerland of Latin America, responded with ferocious repression to a similar challenge posed by Liber Seregni's Frente Amplio, which had the tacit support of the Tupamaros. Perhaps because the world's attention was focused on Chile, Uruguay escaped global condemnation. In Argentina the end of a period of repressive military rule (1966–73) was marked by the return of Juan Domingo Perón, with his new wife María Isabel. His trip from the airport into the capital was accompanied by the bullets of rival factions and a number of people were left dead. His return, like his exile, provoked enormous debates within the Argentinian Left, a reprise of debates that had exercised socialists when he was in power. Was he a demagogic populist or a hero of a national liberation movement? The Trotskyist Left had divided bitterly over the question during his first presidency (1946–55) and did so again, when the Revolutionary Workers' Party (the PRT) split in 1968 between those who argued for political action over a broad front and those who advocated armed struggle and a guerrilla strategy. The latter, the PRT-ERP, led by Mario Roberto Santucho, carried out a series of armed actions, kidnappings, and assassinations during the military regime (1966–73). After Perón's return they declared him to be a counter-revolutionary and relaunched the armed struggle with the support of other groups, including the shadowy Montoneros led by Mario Firmenich (who would subsequently prove to have been a provocateur). The internal social crisis intensified. This was not the Peron of earlier times and after his death in July 1974 power passed to his second wife, María Isabel, who could never command the enormous popular support of Evita (who died of leukemia in 1952). Maria Isabel's companion López Rega, from the Interior Ministry, created the death squads which later wreaked such devastation in the military regime of 1976–83. Yet the PRT was virtually destroyed by 1975.

As new movements emerged in Central America, to provide another point of reference, they too distanced themselves by and large from any explicit communist connection. Yet the activists of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua certainly saw themselves as revolutionaries, and Washington defined them as a communist threat, especially during the presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan. Walt Rostow's domino theory of the Vietnam period returned once more to the seminar rooms of the US government. The late 1970s witnessed a surge of mass struggles. The resurgent guerrilla struggle in Guatemala confronted a series of brutally repressive military governments. And in El Salvador a tradition of trade-union activity connected to the guerrilla strategies of the four major revolutionary organizations—though as the urban struggle grew, the rural guerrillas were locked in a political crisis. Most commentators would have predicted that a mass movement of resistance would arise first in El Salvador, but instead it was the most obdurate dictatorship of all, the Somoza dynasty, that fell first, on 19 July 1979. The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), originally formed in 1961 and given its current name in 1967, was seriously divided at the time of Somoza's overthrow between three factions—a

prolonged people's war current led by the charismatic founder of the FSLN, Tomás Borge; a proletarian faction, advocating political action, led by Jaime Wheelock; and the so-called Third (*Tercerista*) faction under the Ortega brothers whose political strategy embraced what Guevara had called 'armed propaganda actions' (such as taking over the National Assembly in 1977), designed to mobilize liberal and democratic support within and outside the country in support of an anti-Somoza movement. This eclectic third strategy prevailed, though not happily. In fact what precipitated the overthrow of Somoza was a largely spontaneous rising in the town of Masaya that began with the funeral of the assassinated outspoken but conservative opponent of Somoza, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. As always, a successful revolution gave the Sandinistas, and therefore their strategies, an enormous political authority in the region. Yet their armed struggle methods were sustained by a far-from-revolutionary programme and general hatred of the bestial Somoza regime. The group of dissident Trotskyists organized by Nahuel Moreno, who arrived in Nicaragua during the final months of the rising, sought to give a socialist direction to the movement but were rapidly expelled by the new Sandinista government. The struggle in El Salvador, while characterized by a sustained guerrilla campaign, was far more political in its objectives and had the working-class movement at its centre. Unusually, its most respected guerrilla commander, Salvador Cayetano Carpio ('Marcial'), had led a trade union (the bakers) before taking up arms. In January 1980, a quarter of a million marched through the capital, uniting workers' organizations and the guerrilla fronts. It was undoubtedly a potentially revolutionary moment but it was compelled to withdraw to the mountains under a sustained assault from the national army, which was massively underwritten by the US. The initiative now passed to the Sandinistas, who accepted a series of US-sponsored peace initiatives that undermined the Central American revolutions at the very moment President Reagan was transforming Honduras into a heavily armed US military base from which to launch his counter-revolution against a desperately poor Nicaragua. The result was a devastating undeclared ten-year war that effectively destroyed the Nicaraguan economy, and left 100,000 dead or injured in a population of just over 3 million. The Sandinistas were discredited and their reputation worsened after they lost the 1990 election to the right wing and took with them everything that was not nailed to the floor.

For socialists in Latin America this was a deeply disappointing moment. The defeat of the Sandinistas came close behind the collapse of the Soviet Union, and although the communist parties had relatively little influence over the movements for change in the region, especially in the aftermath of Chile, the existence of the Soviet Union and the communist bloc still constituted for many people 'actually existing socialism', directly linked to Cuba. Its demise left the movement with no acknowledged historic reference points. Yet this did not signal an end to resistance. The 1980s were a time of renewed economic assault on Latin America via the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in the guise of the 'structural adjustment programmes' which generated what might be seen as the first mass resistance of the neo-liberal era, the insurrectionary Caracazo in Venezuela. In Brazil in 1980 'Lula', Luis Henrique da Silva, a local

official of the metalworkers' union, was among the founders of the Workers Party (PT). A year earlier, the big strikes in heavy industry around São Paulo—the 'ABC Strikes'—had re-established the working class as the agency of change in the country, which was still under military rule, and brought a new generation of mass leaders onto the political stage. The first programme of the PT resonated with new political influences—the theology of liberation, the advocacy of the poor, and the defence of indigenous rights. With the demise of the Soviet Union, and the crisis in the socialist movement that this produced, this new ideology of revolution came to occupy a privileged space precisely because of its diversity and eclecticism. In Peru, by contrast, the upsurge in the 1980s of Sendero Luminoso, the Maoist guerrilla organization, felt like a throwback to a dogmatic communism still prepared to defend Stalin against his detractors on the Left and the Right.

The history of communism in Latin America could perhaps end here, if we were limiting the discussion to those organizations and movements explicitly locating themselves in a communist tradition. But if communism is seen to refer to the impulse to change the world, to create an authentic democracy, and to distribute wealth more equally and justly, then after the fall of the Berlin Wall the movement continued to search with redoubled energy for new strategies and visions. The indigenous nationalities of Ecuador, coordinated through CONAIE, were representative of what was called the new social movements. The first manifestation of the latter to have a global impact was the rising of the indigenous communities of Chiapas in southern Mexico under the leadership of the EZLN or Zapatistas. Their seizure of the provincial capital, San Cristóbal de las Casas, on 1 January 1994 was timed to coincide with the launch of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), intended as the first stage in the regional integration that would accompany the globalization of the world market. Nothing could have been further from the aggressive modernism of the 1990s than this rebellion of its poorest and most vulnerable victims. Their strategy was summed up in the phrase of their charismatic leader Subcomandante Marcos—'changing the world without taking power'—a concept which involved the creation of autonomous spaces prefiguring a different world. Their assumption was that the struggle for power would lead inexorably towards Stalinism, centralization, and compromise. This 'autonomist' idea took hold among the social movements across Latin America, and was reinforced by the interventions of thinkers like Michael Hardt and Tony Negri (in *Empire*) and John Holloway. It reflected the demise of the strategic thinking that had been enshrined in the idea of a socialist movement, a deep critique of Stalinism, and an equally profound commitment to democracy. It was the founding idea of the World Social Forums, which began in Porto Alegre in 2001. In January 2005 when Hugo Chávez, first elected president of Venezuela in 1999, came to Porto Alegre to speak, he announced the creation of what he called 'twenty-first-century socialism'. It reflected the shared hope that the wheel had come full circle, that the ideas that had informed the communist movement a century earlier were now returning to inform the struggle for a new world, finally divested of their Stalinist resonances.

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CHAPTER 15

COMMUNISM IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

ANNE ALEXANDER

On May Day 1959 two boys were watching crowds throng the streets of Baghdad for the workers' day parade. Twelve-year-old Hani Lazim was awed by the size of the demonstration: 'It was just . . . endless. Whenever we went to see the end of it, we couldn't.'[1] Nine-year old Sami Ramadani, the youngest child in a large family of communist activists living in Al-Waziriyya, saw the march with his mother, sitting on the wall of a mosque in Al-Rashid Street, 'watching endless streams of people' until two or three in the morning.[2]

Decades later both still recalled the Communist Party's huge presence on the march: echoing in the endlessly repeated slogans calling for communist participation in the government. Lazim remembers that his father, a former party member, was worried by the communists' open call to share power with General Abd-al-Karim Qasim, the first president of the republic which had been established by the overthrow of the monarchy in July 1958.

> I remember my father didn't like it at all. And I asked him, I said 'why Dad, why not?' He said 'nobody gives you government, you take it. It is a foolish thing to say. You don't say it. If you want it, go and take it, if you can. But don't say it, because you are actually antagonizing them and they could hit you back.' And I remember that very well.[3]

For the past year, the communists had worked in alliance with Qasim against his Arab nationalist and Ba'athist rivals, mobilizing mass protests against an attempted coup led by a rising in Mosul. Now they claimed the reward of seats in the government. However, Qasim refused and moved quickly to neutralize communist networks within the police and army. Within a few years the Arab nationalists and Ba'athists were in the ascendant, carrying out a coup in 1963 in which Qasim and hundreds of communist activists perished. Asking for power and actually taking it turned out to be very different things.

The events of May 1959 serve as a useful starting point for an exploration of communism in the Islamic world. The Iraqi communists' dilemma over their relationship with the Iraqi nationalist Qasim was only the local expression of a tendency which went to the heart of what communism usually meant in practice in Muslim-majority societies. Confronted with an unfolding anti-colonial revolution in a society where the modern working class was small, the Iraqi communists chose a strategic alliance with 'progressive' army officers who wanted to do away with direct colonial rule and build a strong, modern state. Faced with a message from the leadership of the Communist Part of the Soviet Union (CPSU) which called on them not to upset the geopolitical balance of forces and harm the interests of Soviet foreign policy by toppling Qasim, the Iraqi party's leaders acquiesced. Yet the experience of the Iraqi communists over the previous decades holds other lessons: long before the emergence of Qasim and the underground networks of dissident army officers, the party had enjoyed considerable success in building an organization rooted in key sections of the working class; and despite its relatively small size, it played a leading role in the mass mobilizations against the British-backed monarchy. The resonance of communist ideas among the rail-workers of Schalchiyyah, the Basra port workers, or the oil workers of Kirkuk during the 1940s and 1950s illustrated the potential for communism to win an audience far beyond narrow circles of intellectuals.[4]

'The Islamic world' is here interpreted to mean Muslim-majority societies, and for reasons of space, only a selection of these will be discussed. However, there are common patterns in the history of communism that link together the experiences of many of these societies. The most important of these had little to with Islam. Rather, they reflected the impact of European imperialism and local resistance, the uneven tempo of integration into the global economy, the timing of the struggles for national independence, and the location of the post-colonial regimes in the great games of geopolitics. Similar factors, in short, to those that shaped the development of communism in large parts of the non-Muslim colonial and post-colonial world. The other side of this narrative is the interwoven story of the decline of communist movements in most Muslim-majority societies and the rise of their Islamist competitors. It will be argued that this trajectory is best explained not by recourse to essentialist explanations about the appeal of Islamist politics to Muslim believers, but by the failures of the post-colonial states on which the communists had pinned their hopes for social change and national liberation.

The experience of the Iraqi communists in the 1940s and 1950s illustrates four different meanings of communism. The first, and least well-developed of these, was communism as the theory and practice of workers' self-emancipation. Because communist ideas arrived in societies where the modern working class was still in formation, and because the period when communist parties in most Muslim countries were formed came after the consolidation of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, this aspect of communism was generally submerged. Second, communism could also be an ideology of modernization and development, finding a natural partnership with other modernizing political and social forces such as the disaffected army officers who overthrew the colonial-era monarchies across much of the Middle East during the 1950s. Thirdly, the other face

of modernization and development was the drive for national independence, and the appeal of communism also reflected its meaning as an ideology of national liberation. For most of the period covered by this chapter, these three aspects of communism interacted with a fourth: communism as geopolitics.

The central argument advanced here is that the history of communism in the Islamic world was shaped by the choices of the generation of communist activists in the era of anti-colonial revolution after the Second World War. In much of the Islamic world, this generation was the first that could work with emerging workers' movements that had the potential to become a self-organized force of sufficient weight to play an independent role in national politics. The expansion of industry and the modern infrastructure of the state that followed the war provided the social and economic foundations for a kind of politics that had been impossible for the previous generation. The orthodox communist interpretation of the possibilities of this period was that the best outcome of the anti-colonial and social struggles would be the formation of strong, independent, modern states committed to national development, preferably by a non-capitalist path. In the early phases of the anti-colonial struggle, orthodox communists tended to support calls for greater democratic freedoms on a liberal model. However, once the crisis of the *anciens régimes* had been resolved by others—with the seizure of power by sections of the modern middle class, sometimes in army uniform and sometimes in civilian dress—they moved strongly in the direction of supporting the state-capitalist economic policies and corporatist institutions of the post-colonial regimes. There were some voices that articulated a heterodox interpretation of the period, but these were rarely in a position to reach a mass audience. In essence, the communists of the post-war era attempted to resolve the tensions inherent in applying a theory of working-class self-emancipation to societies where capitalism was still developing by concluding a Faustian pact with those sections of the middle class able to turn the state into the primary vehicle of national development.

This can be seen as a Faustian pact in two senses. Firstly, for the urban working class, there was some real content to this bargain insofar as states that embarked on state-capitalist strategies of import substitution in a period when the global economy was expanding, were often able to improve pay and offer workers a range of benefits via access to health care, education, and housing. Secondly, however, once the state-capitalist model of the post-colonial states entered into crisis in the 1970s, and the communists' erstwhile allies in the state sought to extricate themselves from their side of their bargain with the working class, it was not the communists who benefited but the resurgent Islamist organizations.

The idea that communism was *fundamentally* an ideology of state-led modernization and that Islamism was an expression of backwardness and reaction because it articulated its critique of the state and imperialism in religious language, played a crucial role in shaping communist reactions to the contestation between Islamist movements and the state. The idea that the state institutions could be reformed from within and that, as expressions of modernity, they should be defended against Islamism was deeply rooted among those who came to communist politics in the 1950s. Thus during the late 1980s

and into the 1990s, large parts of the communist movement in countries as varied as Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, and Turkey stood with the state against the Islamists, accelerating a decline which intensified as the crisis in the Soviet Union deepened. In the case of the 1979 Iranian revolution, some sections of the Left assumed positions towards the rising power of Khomeini and his supporters that appeared on the surface to contradict this pattern. Yet their perspective mirrored that which insisted that the state's role as a vehicle for national development should override communist objections to working with dictators, the only difference being that the rhetorical emphasis had shifted to the anti-imperialist struggle. Of course, Khomeini's opposition to the USA was not merely rhetorical: the Iranian revolution represented an enormous setback for US interests in the region. This was reflected in the bloody and protracted nature of the subsequent war between Iraq and Iran, where US backing for Saddam Hussein played a critical role in intensifying the conflict. The common thread, it will be argued, was the attitude of communists to the state, and not whether their failure to act independently of it was justified by the role of state leaders in national economic development, defence of 'modern values', anti-imperialism, or a combination of all three.

From the Bolshevik Encounter with Islam to the Second World War

The development of communist organizations in the Islamic world was intimately bound up with the fate of the revolutionary wave that engulfed the Russian Empire and much of Europe at the end of the First World War. Although contacts between political activists and European socialists in some parts of the Islamic world, such as Indonesia, occurred before the war, it was the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 that brought ideas of communism to wider audiences. The consolidation of power by Stalin and the turn towards policies that prioritized the survival of the Soviet Union over the spread of world revolution marked the end of the revolutionary moment of 1917. Within this geopolitical framework, however, other more localized factors were at work. The first was the rise and decline of the anti-colonial rebellions in the Islamic world of the post-First World War era; the second was the emergence in the 1930s of the embryonic Islamist, secular nationalist, and communist movements that would come to prominence after 1945, stimulated by the crisis of the movements which had led the first wave of anti-colonial rebellions.

The leadership of many of the first wave of anti-colonial movements was formed by an alliance between elements of the landed and mercantile elites which had grown up in the shadow of colonialism, and an emerging Westernized urban middle class in which the 'liberal professions' such as lawyers, journalists, and teachers played a critical role. Beinin and Lockman associate this social layer in the Arab countries with 'the new occupations to which capitalist development had given rise', such as secondary and university

students, teachers in Western-style schools, lawyers, journalists and other professionals, white-collar employees, and lower and middle-level government functionaries.[5] These movements generally took Western liberal political ideals as their reference point. Their leaders criticized the colonial powers for advocating liberal democracy at home and refusing to extend it to their imperial dominions. The new popular movements of the 1940s advanced radical critiques of the dominant political system in the West (rejecting or marginalizing the role of parliamentary democracy, for example), and appealed to a mass audience which included not only the lower middle class, but also growing numbers of urban workers for the first time.

In the wake of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, the question of the relationship between communism and Islam became a critical issue in the battle for the survival of the new Soviet state. As the large Muslim societies of Central Asia which had been conquered and colonized by Russians in previous generations were drawn into that struggle, the Bolsheviks found themselves confronting a series of challenging questions: what did the slogans of soviet power mean in societies where modern industry was almost absent? How should they, as leaders of a beleaguered, nascent workers' state, relate to the varied movements that welcomed the downfall of tsarism as the dawn of their own national liberation? What stance should they, as materialists and atheists, take towards Muslim religious practice and religious property? Dave Crouch has argued that the Bolsheviks' pre-revolutionary attempts to win over members of oppressed religious groups, such as the non-Orthodox Christian minorities, can be seen as providing a basic set of principles to guide their practice.[6] At the Congress of the Peoples of the East, organized in Baku in 1920 by the Comintern, Bolshevik leaders appealed to the delegates to see their own struggle for freedom from colonialism as being indivisible from the victory of workers' revolutions in Europe that would unseat their colonial masters. More than this, they held up the prospect that popular struggles against colonialism could contribute to that victory by increasing pressure on Europe's rulers and destabilizing their empires.[7]

However, the ascendancy of Stalin, and the subsequent transformation of the Russian economy and society in the late 1920s and 1930s, recast the relationship between communism and Islam. In place of the approach of the early years of Soviet power in Central Asia, when Muslim religious practice had been supported and even encouraged, the late 1920s and 1930s saw organized campaigns against the veil and purges of 'Muslim nationalist' figures such as Sultan Galiev.

Outside the Soviet Union, the pivotal issue at stake was not directly the question of workers' power, but how to relate to the nationalist movements that emerged to challenge European colonialism. Across the Middle East, into Central and South Asia, a modern working class had very recently begun to form in those sectors of the economy most closely integrated with global capitalism, such as transport and communications, the oil industry, and small pockets of modern manufacturing. However, although this strategic economic role added political weight to workers' protests, the working class was still at too early a stage of development to play the role in leading society envisaged in classical Marxist theory.

Secondly, the rise of Stalin played a critical role in shaping the theoretical and organizational landscape in which the first communist movements in Muslim-majority societies developed. Although the seeds of communist organization had been sown in many areas of the Islamic world during the revolutionary wave that shook the European empires in the wake of the First World War, many organizations barely survived the re-establishment of the colonial order in the post-war settlement. Thus, although Indonesia, Lebanon, Egypt, and Morocco were countries with majority-Muslim populations where communist groups existed during the 1920s, these organizations remained in general very small, and it was not until the 1940s that they began to attract broader support. With industrialization and collectivization of agriculture after 1928, embryonic communist groups in the Muslim world came to see in the Soviet Union a successful model of economic and social development which, as we will explore in more detail, seemed to offer a route to modernity untainted by colonialism.

Even before Stalin consolidated power, Bolshevik leaders began to devote substantial resources to supporting the political development of communist activists from Muslim backgrounds, through study at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) in Moscow. Notable KUTV graduates included Yusuf Salman Yusuf (Fahd), who led the Iraqi Communist Party between 1941 and 1949, and the Syrian communist leader Khaled Bakdash. Within the emerging communist organizations in Iraq and Syria in the 1940s, the authority of Fahd and Bakdash in part derived from their experience of study at KUTV. In Egypt, among the small communist organizations emerging in this period there was intense competition to gain a degree of official recognition from the Soviet Union. The dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 changed the mechanisms whereby communist organizations related to Moscow and to each other. In large parts of the Arab world the communist party of the colonial power was often a key link between local communist groups and Moscow, with communists in Iraq, Jordan, and the Gulf liaising with the Communist Party of Great Britain and communists in Syria, Lebanon, and the Maghreb with the French Communist Party.[8]

The main importance of Stalin's consolidation of power , and the political battles that surrounded it, lay not so much in their impact on the emerging communist movements in the Islamic world, as on secular nationalists and populists of many political colours who were attracted to the Soviet model. The dramatic transformation of the beleaguered and impoverished Soviet Union in the 1930s caught the imagination of millions in the colonial world who saw in the breathtaking speed of Soviet industrial and agricultural development a vision of their own hoped-for future. It was with secular nationalist forces that the communist movements of the 1940s often found themselves allying, although at other times they were locked in bitter competition with them. At the same time, the 1930s also saw the birth of mass Islamist movements, with the explosive growth of the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 by schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna in Isma'iliyya in Egypt.

Despite their apparent differences, Islamist, nationalist, and Stalinist communist movements had much in common in that all three disputed the claim by the older generation of nationalists that their modernizing mission could be achieved through

the establishment of liberal parliamentary democracy and the achievement of national independence. The Islamist current, associated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, argued for a return to Islamic values and warned against cultural and political imports from the West.[9] This did not mean a rejection of modernity as such, but rather a path towards it that was culturally defined by reference to Islam. For their part, the communists pointed to the success of Soviet economic development as proof that modern, prosperous societies could come into being without either parliamentary democracy or liberal capitalism. Secular nationalists, such as the Arab nationalists influenced by thinkers such as Michel Aflaq, gravitated towards the state as the means to solve the riddle of economic backwardness and assert national dignity. Crucially, all three currents found themselves competing among the overlapping popular constituencies created by the rapid expansion of a modern lower middle class of government clerks, students, teachers, and journalists, and the emergence of a modern working class.

Communists and the Anti-Colonial Revolutions

The Second World War, like the First, ended in a wave of revolutions. The epicentre was not Europe, however, but the former European colonies in the Middle East and Asia. For the first time, communist organizations emerged on a scale capable of relating to the mass anti-colonial movements of the period, and in a number of countries played highly significant roles in both the revolt against colonialism and the explosive social struggles that accompanied it. As in the previous generation, however, the majority of communists remained orientated towards the Soviet Union, as both a model for economic development and the reference point for their geopolitical allegiances. In contrast to the interwar years, the growth of the modern lower middle class through the expansion of the state bureaucracy and education system, and the birth of a small, but significant urban working class changed the context in which communist movements developed. For the first time, communism in the Islamic world could be both a theory and a practice which connected with workers' everyday struggles. Egypt, for example, saw the development of Egyptian-owned manufacturing, including the giant cotton mill complex owned by Misr Spinning in Al-Mahalla al-Kubra which by the end of the Second World War employed 25,000.[10] Shubra al-Khayma, a northern suburb of Cairo, was also an important textile-producing area, dominated by smaller foreign-owned mills in the 1940s. Shubra in particular proved to be an important recruiting ground for a generation of communist activists who played leading roles in the textile workers' struggles of the era. In Iraq, the key industries where communist activists established a long-lasting and significant base were transport, including the railways and Basra Port, and the oil industry.[11]

Leading figures among the Shubra textile workers attempted to make connections between the fight for better wages and conditions (which in their case generally meant confrontation with British or French bosses) and the wider struggle against the British colonial presence in Egypt. Mahmud al-'Askari and Taha Sa'ad 'Uthman from the Shubra textile workers' union worked closely with communist lawyer Yusuf Darwish in an underground cell in the mid-1940s. Al-'Askari and 'Uthman were among the founder members of the Workers' Committee for National Liberation in 1945. The committee's founding statement confidently expressed the idea that organized workers should lead the battle against colonialism:

> The Workers' Committee for National Liberation considers it the duty of the working class—now that it is achieving its class characteristics—to put forward a national programme with the object of liberating the mass of the people . . . from the yoke of imperialism and the internal oppression and exploitation.[12]

The committee's demands included: 'the evacuation of foreign troops from Egypt and the Sudan', 'the abolition of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty', and 'Egypt to take possession of the Suez Canal', as well as nationalization of foreign companies, the recognition of trade union rights, land reform, female suffrage, judicial reform, and the abolition of the political police.

The rapid expansion of secondary and tertiary education was another critical factor in shaping the composition of the mass movements of the era, including the communist movement. In Egypt the number of secondary school pupils increased by 327 per cent between 1940 and 1951, while the number of enrolments in the modern university sector expanded by 410 per cent over the same period. In Iraq, there were 28,000 secondary and university students by 1948, up from 2,000 in 1927. An even bigger leap took place over the following decade with combined numbers rising to 136,000 by 1958, of which 8,500 were in higher education, and 11,000 in teacher training. Students played an important role in communist organizations in both countries. Sa'di Yusif joined the Iraqi Communist Party while at teacher-training college in Baghdad: decades later he recalled the camaraderie of communist student life, including educational picnics complete with communist songs and red flags. Communist students organized within the elected student administrative committees which helped to manage the halls of residence, canteens, and sanitary facilities. For student activists who aspired to leading roles within the Communist Party's underground organization there was a long process of education and development. Through recruiting new members, collecting funds for the party, and organizing protests they would prove their loyalty and commitment.[13] The nexus between worker and student activism around the anti-colonial struggle took a particularly organized form in Egypt 1946. On 9 February the police attacked a march by student protesters and this triggered a wave of mobilization that saw the formation of the National Committee of Workers and Students which brought together delegates from the student movement and the trade unions, and called a successful national general strike on 21 February.[14]

In accordance with the ideological framework already discussed, most communist leaders considered that even where the working class played an important role in the anti-colonial movements, communist parties should not think of challenging for state power, but work alongside other social forces to achieve a democratic revolution and national independence. Among themselves, communists drew an analogy between the tasks of the coming national revolution, which they believed was the only way to secure even mild social reform and basic democratic rights, and the situation facing the Bolsheviks in Russia under tsarist rule. Taking their cue from the perspective outlined by the Comintern at its Sixth Congress in 1928, which saw the possibility in the colonies of the revolution passing from a bourgeois-democratic stage to a 'dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry', the Egyptian communists posed three tasks: 'the establishment of a democratic republic (in which equality of rights and full freedom of self-determination would be granted to all nationalities), confiscation of the estates of the big landowners, and application of the eight-hour day'. Communists in Egypt and Iraq, however, assumed a broader alliance would be necessary than that between the working class and peasantry. An internal document sent by Egyptian communists to the Communist Party of Great Britain put it like this: 'The people's democracy we want to establish in Egypt is not a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We aim to establish a democratic dictatorship of all the classes struggling against imperialism and feudalism.'[15]

It was precisely this understanding of the balance of forces within the national movement that led the Democratic Movement for National Liberation (DMNL), the largest communist organization in Egypt, to work in alliance with the Free Officers who overthrew the monarchy in 1952 and the Iraqi Communist Party to champion Qasim as 'sole leader'. There was, however, a complex interaction between communism as geopolitics and communism as a current within the mass movements of the day, as the gyrations of the Egyptian communists in relation to Gamal Abd-al-Nasser and the Free Officers illustrate. The DMNL, for example, faced stern criticism from leading figures in the British and French communist parties for its initial support for the Free Officers, partly because Soviet leaders were concerned that the Free Officers might be pro-American.[16] Instead, the CPGB argued for a common front with other opposition groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, which it had previously characterized as fascist.[17] However, following his confrontation with British, French, and Israeli forces over the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956, the Soviet leadership revised its assessment of Abd-al-Nasser, claiming him as the leader of a 'victorious national revolution'.[18] The Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU in the same year acknowledged that national independence was possible under the 'national bourgeoisie' and subsequently a theory of 'non-capitalist development' was fleshed out which argued that a transition to socialism was possible under nationalist regimes that had Soviet support.[19] Ironically for the Egyptian communists, Abd-al-Nasser's approval by the Soviet Union coincided with a fierce wave of repression against the newly unified Egyptian Communist Party which saw hundreds arrested and tortured. Over the next few years, however, Abd-al-Nasser moved closer into the geopolitical orbit of the Soviet Union and adopted a strategy for economic development that borrowed heavily from the Soviet model of the era. In 1961 most of the

non-agricultural economy was nationalized, including private banks. Taxes on incomes above £E10,000 were set at 90 per cent, joint-stock companies were required to spend 15 per cent of their profits on workers' housing and community projects, and workers and clerical staff were guaranteed representation on the board of directors. The working week was reduced and a minimum wage announced. Abd-al-Nasser created new representative and legislative bodies, but demanded the dissolution of political parties and called on social classes to renounce mobilization for their own interests. The Egyptian communist movement—in general—acquiesced in this, preferring to work for change from within a regime that appeared to have imposed a large part of the communists' own economic and social programme from above.

The Crisis of the Post-Colonial State-Capitalist Regimes and the Rise of Islamism

The 1960s marked the high tide of the state-capitalist economic development that underpinned a large number of the post-colonial regimes of the Islamic world. In many case, these regimes followed the lead of the Soviet Union not only in economic policy, but also gravitated into its political orbit. The exact nature of the relationship between, for example, the new rulers of Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Algeria, and the Soviet Union, was shaped by a range of factors, which provided more or less room for manoeuvre and independent action. Despite the fears of successive US administrations about growing Soviet influence in the Middle East, these were far from being client states of the Soviet Union.

Communist movements often took the role of junior partners to the ruling party in countries where new regimes aligned themselves with the Soviet Union geopolitically and modelled their economic policies and political systems on those of that country. Leaders such as Gamal Abd-al-Nasser in Egypt, Abd-al-Karim Qasim in Iraq, Houari Boumediene in Algeria, and Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia were among those whose socialist rhetoric and ambition to build modern, industrial societies seemed to justify communist collaboration with the new regimes. The role of the state in expanding women's rights by revising personal status codes governing marriage, inheritance, and child custody laws, and encouraging women to join the workforce and higher levels of education provided another practical focus for cooperation.

Despite the hopes raised by the first signs of economic and social transformation in the 1960s, by the end of the decade, cracks were beginning to appear. The 1970s was marked by the return of economic crisis on a global scale and an international shift in economic orthodoxy away from state-led development towards neo-liberalism. Islamist movements reaped the long-term political benefits of the crisis, while communist movements found it difficult to extricate themselves from the embrace of the post-colonial regimes. In many cases, the communist movement itself fragmented, as

dissident groups critical of the alliances with the nationalist regimes emerged, but these were unable to dominate the landscape of opposition. In Iraq and Syria, for example, a part of the Communist Party remained in formal alliance with the Ba'ath Party until the end. Other sections chose different routes into opposition, including in the Iraqi case engaging in the armed struggle in Kurdistan. In general, the Islamists benefited from having been excluded from alliances with the regimes, and this enabled them to seize some of the terrain of opposition now vacated by the communists. The long-term shift away from state-capitalist economic policies also created opportunities for Islamist movements to engage with large constituencies among the urban poor through charity work, in the shadow of the state's retreat from providing universal welfare services. Finally, the changing geopolitical context propelled Islamist movements into the front line of resistance to the USA, bolstering their anti-imperialist appeal and winning part of the audience that communist movements had attracted in previous generations.

The first phase of the crisis of the post-colonial regimes climaxed in the late 1980s in a series of popular rebellions driven by frustrations over mass youth unemployment and rising food prices, but also by anger at the political failures of the nationalist regimes. Algeria was engulfed in riots and protests in 1988 and it was the rising Islamist forces of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) which were the main political beneficiaries, winning municipal elections and then taking the majority of seats in the first round of the 1991 parliamentary elections. As is discussed in Allison Drew's essay, in this volume, the rise of the FIS intersected with the almost complete collapse of the Algerian Left. Hugh Roberts argues that a large part of the appeal of the FIS lay not in its rejection of the nationalist legacy of Boumediene and the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) but in its transformation and reappropriation: 'Algerian Islamism embraces both Boumediène's Islamic opponents and many of his political children since they became orphans.'[20]

The most important factor shaping the geopolitical environment for communists in the Islamic world was, of course, the long-term decline and eventual collapse of the Soviet Union. These were long-term processes, which did not work themselves out in a neatly ordered sequence. The events of 1979–80, for example, saw the USA excoriating the Islamist ascendancy in Iran, while aiding Islamist guerrillas resisting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. However, just over a decade after the Soviet withdrawal, the USA would find itself mired in an equally unwinnable conflict with some of its former Islamist allies in Afghanistan following the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and other US targets by the al-Qaida jihadist group on 11 September 2001.

The Iranian Revolution: Variation on a Theme?

The Iranian Left faced a profound challenge in the popular revolution of 1979 which overthrew the monarchy and established an Islamic republic. Iran had a long history of

left-wing organization and a sizeable pro-Soviet Communist Party, the Tudeh. During the mid-1940s the Tudeh boasted a newspaper with a circulation of 120,000, organized rallies with up to 100,000 in attendance, and created a dense network of local party organizations and trade unions in Tehran and the provincial cities.[21] The coup against nationalist prime minister Mohamed Mossadegh in 1953, which was supported by the CIA and turned the relatively weak constitutional monarchy into an authoritarian state, brought an end to the period of popular mobilization in which the Tudeh had flourished. Despite this repression, and the emergence of new challengers on the Left who advocated guerrilla warfare as a strategy to bring down the regime, the Tudeh remained a significant force on the Iranian Left into the 1970s.

The revolution of 1979 created opportunities for communist ideas to reach a mass audience among workers, the urban and rural poor, and wide layers of Iranians radicalized by the eruption of enormous popular protests and strikes. The combination of rapid industrialization and uneven modernization in the 1960s had created social tensions that proved impossible to contain within the authoritarian political structures of the monarchy. A brief period of liberalization by the shah in 1977 opened the door to a flowering of discontent by middle-class activists and intellectuals who began to raise demands for democracy. Yet the urban working class was the revolution's 'chief battering ram'.[22] Strikes over economic demands multiplied during 1978, but their intersection with the rising tide of street demonstrations against the shah 'changed the dynamism of the revolutionary process'.[23] Strikes by workers in critical economic sectors, such as oil and transport, paralysed the state during October and November, raising explicitly political demands. At the head of the oil workers' grievances in the strike of 15 October 1978 was the call for the cancellation of martial law, followed by demands for the release of political prisoners and the dissolution of the shah's secret police.[24] After the shah fled Iran in January 1979 workers in hundreds of companies formed factory committees (*shuras*) which in many cases began to exercise democratic control over production. Popular neighbourhood councils were formed in some areas, taking responsibility for food and fuel supplies, law and order, as well as organizing local demonstrations and protests.

The shah's regime finally collapsed on 11 February 1979, following a two-day battle between sections of the armed forces loyal to the monarchy, opposition guerrillas, and troops supporting the revolutionary provisional government. The leading clerical opponent of the shah, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, returned from exile in Paris on 1 February, and was able to establish himself as an extremely powerful figure in the new structures of the republican state. This did not mean that Khomeini and his supporters were yet in a dominant position, or that their political theory of clerical rule (*Velayat-e Faqih*) was hegemonic, even among Islamists. Intense struggles between Liberals, Islamists, and the Left were played out over the following years at all levels of society and the state. Val Moghadam argues that this process is best understood as two revolutions, not one, while Peyman Jafari sees the consolidation of the Islamic Republic as a populist counter-revolution which preserved capitalist relations of production within a new framework of state-capitalist development.[25]

Three features of the early revolutionary period were critical to Khomeini's success: the vacuum within the state and wide sections of the economy created by the flight of local and foreign managers and technicians after the fall of the shah, Khomeini's establishment of a parallel structure of clerical authority within the state, and his deft use of anti-imperialism to rally his supporters and divide his rivals. The exodus of managers and officials propelled the provisional government into a massive programme of nationalizations to save the economy from collapse, and created opportunities for Islamists to entrench themselves in the state. The Khomeinist faction created parastatal institutions that provided welfare services and jobs and thus the material underpinnings for the ideology of clerical rule.

The consolidation of the Islamic republic was accompanied by a purge of the Left. The Tudeh was banned, the left-wing guerrilla factions defeated and driven into exile, and 12,000 opponents of the Islamic republic killed or executed between 1981 and 1985.[26] Moreover, the establishment of a form of clerical rule led many on the Left to draw the conclusion that the revolution had propelled Iranian society in a reactionary direction. The initial response of much of the Iranian Left to Khomeini had, however, been largely positive, adding to the confusion. The Tudeh supported Khomeini's anti-imperialist gestures, and hoped that his traditional lower-middle-class supporters would move into alliance with the working class, confront the big bourgeoisie, and shift the Iranian state into the orbit of the Soviet Union.[27] The guerrilla organizations, such as the Left Islamist People's Mojahedin, emphasized the need for internal unity against the potential threat of imperialist intervention or royalist restoration, and thus urged their supporters not to challenge Khomeini's attacks on women's rights or workers' organizations.[28]

On the surface, these positions appear radically different to those adopted by communist organizations elsewhere in the Islamic world which, as we discussed earlier, often supported existing secular regimes against 'reactionary' or even 'fascist' Islamist challengers. Yet, as Jafari argues, there was a common source which linked the pro- and anti-Islamist positions: a belief that only after the successful completion of a struggle for national independence and democracy could communists begin to raise the possibility of the conquest of state power by the working class. For the Tudeh, the adoption of economic policies setting Iran on the road to 'non-capitalist development' would ease the transition from the first revolution to the second.[29]

After the Fall: Communism in an Era of Neo-Liberalism and Revolution

The collapse of the Soviet Union was profoundly disorientating for the remaining communist organizations in the Islamic world, and the period after 1991 was marked by the rapid decline of membership and political influence. Spectres of the civil war that engulfed Algeria after the military aborted the parliamentary elections in order to

prevent a victory for the FIS haunted the Arab world. During the 1990s, other states in the region stepped up their campaigns against the Islamist opposition, and in some countries it was the rump of the communist movement that provided some of their most vociferous supporters. Although the conflict in Egypt never reached the same violent proportions as the Algerian catastrophe, Rifaat al-Sa'id of the Egyptian Tagammu' Party, and a veteran of the communist movement in the 1940s, played an important role in articulating a critique of Islamism that emphasized the need for the Left to defend the existing structures of the state, despite its criticisms of the regime's social and economic policies. In Iraq fragments of the Communist Party followed their different trajectories: the pro-Ba'athist section supported Saddam Hussein until his defeat and overthrow by US-led forces in 2003, while the section of the party that had broken with the Ba'athists returned from exile to Iraq and even served in the government installed by US troops.

In Tunisia the fall of Zein-al-Din Ben Ali from power on 14 January 2011 in the face of a popular revolutionary mobilization that had begun in the impoverished towns of central Tunisia at the end of 2010, triggered the greatest wave of revolutionary upheavals the Arab world had seen since the 1940s. Eleven days later, mass demonstrations in Egypt raised the Tunisian slogan: 'The people want the downfall of the regime.' After a series of protests mobilizing millions, and a wave of strikes across the country, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak was removed from power by his own generals on 11 February. The revolutionary wave continued to wash across the region, with uprisings in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

The revolutions represented an opportunity and a massive challenge for the remnants of the communist movement in the Arab world. Tunisia and Egypt presented the most obviously fertile ground for a revival of the revolutionary Left, because of the critical role played by workers' strikes and protests in the revolutions there. However, they operated on a terrain shaped by the presence of far larger Islamist forces. In particular, the question of how to relate to the success of reformist Islamists in winning votes and support from the working class and wider layers of the poor, remained a pressing one. The revolutionary crisis in both Tunisia and Egypt continued long after elections brought the major parties of the Islamist opposition into government. The Ennahdha movement, led by Rachid Ghannouchi, won a plurality of seats in Tunisia's post-revolutionary Constituent Assembly in October 2011. The Freedom and Justice Party, founded by the Muslim Brotherhood in the wake of the Egyptian revolution, dominated the first parliament elected after the fall of Mubarak, with the Salafist Al-Nur Party in second place. The Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi also won a bitterly fought presidential election in June 2012. Despite claims that 'Arab Spring' had turned into 'Islamist Winter',[30] the challenges facing these new Islamist governments were immense: during 2012 continued strikes and protests buffeted the Islamist governments in both countries.

Tunisia witnessed a significant regroupment of the left during 2012, with the Workers' Party (formerly the Communist Workers' Party) playing a leading role in the Popular Front. In Egypt, the secular Left in general saw a modest revival in the wake of the revolution, although the communist element in it faced a strong challenge from non-Stalinist

revolutionary socialists, who had emerged as the core of a 'New Left' in the 1990s. The continuing salience of debates over the relationship between communists, Islamists, and the state was evinced in the crisis over the constitution of 2012. Communist activists, including Rifaat al-Sa'id, joined a secular alliance spanning the Left, liberals, and some elements of the old ruling party, in order to confront the Muslim Brotherhood's newly-elected president Mohamed Morsi and to oppose the constitution drafted by an Islamist-dominated assembly. Other revolutionary activists responded with fury to the idea that protecting the 'civil nature' of the state from violation by the Brotherhood was more important that rejecting elements of the old regime. The outcome of these struggles remains uncertain, but the revival of secular activism and the crisis of the Islamist parties suggest that it is perhaps too soon to write the obituary of communism in the Islamic world.

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CHAPTER 16

COMMUNISM IN AFRICA[1]

ALLISON DREW

Twentieth-century Africa's predominantly rural population, mostly subsistence cultivators, did not offer a likely terrain for communism, which saw the urban working class as the driving force for political and socioeconomic change. Moreover, the Communist International (Comintern) was far more concerned with Europe and Asia, although it periodically chastized communists in the imperial countries for their inadequate attention to colonized peoples in Africa. Despite these seemingly inauspicious circumstances, communism gained a foothold along coastal areas where ports ensuring links with Europe allowed the flow of ideas and where railways and roads enabled the dissemination of communist literature.

The century saw a tremendous population surge—from 142 million in 1920, the population rose to over 200 million in 1950 and 600 million in 1990. Urbanization and improved transportation would seemingly have facilitated the spread of communist ideas.[2] Yet, despite its foothold, communism remained a weak movement in Africa, although its influence was sometimes greater than its numbers would suggest. Post-colonial independence saw some thirty-five African states claiming to be communist or socialist, but these were overwhelmingly the result of leadership choices rather than movements from below. This underscores the distinction between communism as a movement subjected to state repression and as a state policy to promote top-down development.

The continent's externally oriented political economy was the underlying reason for communism's weakness as a movement, although the relative neglect of Africa by overseas communists accentuated the problem. Following European conquest, African production became geared to overseas demand. Thus, West Africa's regional economy developed around agricultural exports and manufactured imports. Its smallholder production and capitalist farms did not provide fertile conditions for communism, although travel between West Africa and Europe allowed the diffusion of communist ideas. But in central Africa, where colonial powers allocated land to foreign companies for plantation production, communism made virtually no headway. East Africans dispossessed of their land became farm workers on tea and coffee estates producing for

overseas markets, but there was less contact with Europe and correspondingly less communist influence. In Sudan, however, Marxist ideas were introduced by Egyptian communists and by central and Eastern European immigrants working on the railway, and communism became influential. Southern Africans were subjected to widespread dispossession of their land. In South Africa, where almost 90 per cent of the land was expropriated by white settlers, the mineral reserves facilitated industrial development and the emergence of an industrial working class.[3] North Africa—especially Algeria—was also characterized by significant dispossession and proletarianization. On the north and south ends of the continent, both political economy and contact with Europe favoured the spread of communism.

Communism in Africa falls into two categories. First were local communist initiatives to build alliances with democratic and anti-colonial movements. These began in the 1920s and 1930s and continued into the post-war era; any success reflected their ability to forge links with trade-union, anti-colonial, and nationalist organizations. Second were state-led initiatives following independence, when one-party states adopted communism as a developmental model. In both the colonial and post-colonial periods, communism depended on alliances. Where communists were few in numbers or their movements extremely weak, they generally merged into national liberation movements or left-wing one-party systems. To the degree that they had an independent social base, they maintained their political autonomy.

Communist Initiatives between the First and Second World Wars

In 1920, with the prospects of revolution in Europe effectively finished and the conquest of Africa virtually complete, the Comintern began considering anti-colonial and national liberation movements as a means to weaken imperialism. The Moscow-based Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) was launched in 1921 and began recruiting Africans and African Americans.[4] The Comintern organized an international campaign against colonialism and imperialism, and a Congress of Oppressed Nations was convened in Brussels in February 1927, attended by 174 delegates from 31 countries, although only a few were African. The Congress saw the founding of the League against Imperialism, which insisted on African freedom and equality. The following year the Comintern's Red International of Labour Unions (RILU or Profintern) formed the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW) to spread communist influence in colonized areas. This produced the *Negro Worker*, which was edited by the Trinidadian-born communist George Padmore and distributed in Africa. Yet although the 1920s was a decade of road-building, and lorries became common across many regions, the dissemination of communist material remained very limited.[5]

Not surprisingly, communism was strongest in the settler societies of Algeria and South Africa, which had a degree of industrial development and where workers from overseas had brought their trade-union and socialist traditions. But in both cases communists faced great difficulties. Three factors are paramount in understanding their differing experiences—class structure, geopolitics, and repression. Although the structural conditions impeding the development of communism were arguably more difficult in Algeria than in South Africa, the two cases highlight the degree to which geopolitics pushed the two communist parties down different paths, thus undermining the Comintern's aim of applying universal policies to diverse local and regional conditions.

Algeria and South Africa were both subjected to brutal military conquest that undermined the indigenous social systems and denigrated the local cultures. As arable land was appropriated by Europeans, the amount of land available to the indigenous people declined, leading to sharecropping and the development of an agricultural proletariat and migrant labour force. This process led to the formation of rigidly divided urban working classes. Muslim Algerians and black South Africans were subjected to extreme inequalities vis-à-vis their European and white counterparts.

Yet the two countries had distinctive patterns of proletarianization and urbanization. Algeria was less urbanized than South Africa at comparable points in time, and large numbers of Algerian workers migrated to France, creating a displaced proletariat. The first Algerian worker-based national organization—the *Étoile Nord-Africaine* (North African Star)—was launched in Paris in 1926, reflecting this displacement. By comparison, South Africa's migrant workers went to Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban, and its first worker-based national organization—the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union—was launched in Cape Town in 1919. These different patterns of working-class formation carried implications for political organization.

Crucially, Algeria's geographic proximity to Europe and its colonial relationship with France meant that it felt the impact of European events very intensely, in marked contrast with South Africa, whose political autonomy and distance from Europe meant that, with brief exceptions, local communists were concerned mainly with national rather than European affairs. The Comintern's relationships with communists in Algeria and South Africa also differed markedly. The Comintern prioritized countries and regions that it believed to be internationally significant. This necessarily included the French Communist Party, whose relationship with the Comintern was frequently tense. As a result, the Comintern intervened in Algeria earlier than it did in South Africa.

Promoting communism in Algeria was daunting, both in comparison with industrialized France, with its influential *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF), and with South Africa. From the outset, communism in Algeria was torn between the international and the national. This tension undoubtedly reflected its organizational formation in December 1920 as a region of the PCF, whose local members were overwhelmingly European. As the Comintern placed greater emphasis on national and anti-colonial struggles, it insisted that communist parties in colonized regions build an affinity with the nationally oppressed; after many arguments and expulsions local communists began calling for an independent Algeria.

Communist activity in mid-1920s Algeria took place during a repressive climate. Measured in terms of prison sentences, the onslaught of repression against communists in Algeria was far greater than in South Africa—reflecting both French colonial control and the geopolitics of the Rif War. A key dynamic during the interwar years concerned the possibilities for communist alliances with other movements. The Comintern's geopolitical priorities meant that its policies were implemented in its national sections at different times, and this differentially impacted the abilities of local communists to forge alliances. This was evident in the new line of 'class against class', which led to worldwide purges of first-generation communists and the breakdown of communist alliances with other groups. The Comintern argued that capitalism was on the brink of imminent collapse. The 'class against class' slogan stressed that communists had to combat reformist and social-democratic policies that diverted the working class from the struggle against capitalism.

In Algeria the new line was implemented in late 1927–8. Although the PCF's Algerian region was decimated by the new line purges, by 1933 it was able to make alliances with peasant communities and with the Islamic Reform movement. But in South Africa the new line was introduced in late 1930. The following year the party's founding figures were expelled, and over the next two years its membership collapsed. The CPSA was consumed by factionalism until the mid-1930s.[6]

In 1934 the Comintern adopted the Popular Front, stressing the widest possible alliance of working-class and democratic forces to fight fascism and essentially conceding the failure of the 'class against class' policy. The PCF's critical support for the Popular Front government in France led it to moderate its anti-colonial stance, so that anti-fascism and anti-colonialism became posed in dichotomous terms. Although an autonomous *Parti Communiste Algérien* (PCA) was launched in October 1936, it continued to follow the PCF, which backtracked on the demand for independence. Ironically, despite its formal organizational autonomy, the Popular Front period tied the PCA more firmly to the PCF.[7]

In South Africa the CPSA remained factionalized as racism worsened. In March 1936 the Comintern convened a South Africa commission in Moscow. This led to the ascendancy of Moses Kotane, whose emphasis on building broad alliances dovetailed with the Popular Front strategy. Communists aligned with the ANC and used the state's racially divided political institutions as propaganda platforms. Unlike the Algerian experience, the CPSA's new line purges had produced a Trotskyist movement, which called for a boycott of racially divided institutions; the boycott principle became a hallmark of local Trotskyism. South African socialism was therefore ideologically as well as racially divided; white labour steadfastly refused to support black rights, and the CPSA could not build a Popular Front across the racial divide.[8] Thus, by the start of the Second World War, the experiences of the PCA and CPSA had already diverged due to structural and geopolitical factors.

The significance of regional contexts in understanding communism's impact is underlined by the West African experience. Communism penetrated into French West Africa largely through trade unions. Like Algerians, other African workers in France

joined trade unions in the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), which established affiliates in the colonies. Through the CGT they came into contact with the PCF, which brought Africans to France for training in its Communist Party school. Dakar, French West Africa's administrative, commercial, and industrial centre, was also the railway hub; workers and intellectuals in and passing through Dakar could hear and read about communism.[9]

In the British colonies communist ideas filtered in through individuals who studied overseas or worked in transport unions with international links, such as the Sierra Leone Railwaymen's Union and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, which affiliated to the ITUCNW. This convened an International Conference of Negro Workers in Hamburg in July 1930, which was attended by several West Africans. While repression impeded communism's diffusion in West Africa, the lack of a significant industrial working class, coupled with the prevalence of smallholder and capitalist farming, were far more important factors in shaping an environment that was generally unreceptive to communist ideas. British East Africa had notably less communist influence: Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta studied at the KUTV, but aside from rare individual contacts, the region proved even less accessible to communism.[10]

The Second World War

The Second World War reinforced the Comintern's focus on Europe and Asia. From this time on the experiences of Algeria and South Africa diverged sharply. Sociological similarities remained—rural people moved to cities, where they lived in cramped shanty towns, surviving through formal and informal employment. But politically, the two Communist parties operated in very different conditions.

Algeria's close geographic proximity to war-torn Europe meant that wartime conditions debilitated the tiny PCA. In September 1939 both the PCCF and PCA were banned, remaining illegal until July 1943. The fall of France and establishment of the Vichy Regime in June 1940 brought further repression to Algeria; communists were given lengthy prison sentences, tortured, and condemned to death. Not surprisingly, the PCA's policy on independence changed substantially. From 1939 until 1941, with the Comintern characterizing the war as the product of inter-imperialist rivalry, the PCA called for independence to weaken French imperialism. But from June 1941, when the Soviet Union entered the war and its national sections followed suit, and especially after Algiers became the capital of Free France, the PCF succeeded once more in promoting its own agenda within the diminished PCA. This agenda prioritized the anti-fascist struggle and saw the movement for Algerian independence as a diversion.

The Anglo-American landing in French North Africa in November 1942 led to some political liberalization, but only after February 1943, when the Soviet Union finally won the Battle of Stalingrad, were PCF members released from internment. PCA members had to wait longer, and this allowed the PCF to make political headway in Algeria. The

year 1943 brought limited political liberalization across the Maghreb as communist movements in Tunisia and Morocco, banned during the Vichy period, were legalized. The Comintern's dissolution that year signalled Soviet concern with national security but did not lessen Soviet influence over the international communist movement.

In May 1945, as liberation was proclaimed in France, European settlers massacred tens of thousands of Muslims in eastern Algeria. Viewing the events through the lens of the anti-fascist struggle, the PCF and PCA were slow to condemn the Sétif massacre. Thus, while the PCF's role in the resistance gave it a heroic status in the eyes of some sections of French society, Algerians were at best ambivalent towards communists and more often cynical.[11]

The war had a decidedly different impact on South African communists, who, like the Trotskyists, initially opposed the war. But once Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, the CPSA joined the war effort. This brought it a new-found legitimacy and enabled it to make appreciable gains among white workers and soldiers. Although the CPSA counselled against strike action, it supported the demands of African workers for better pay and working conditions, and as a result its members gained leading positions in both black and white trade unions.

In the aftermath of the 1946 African mineworkers' strike, fifty-two individuals—communists, ANC members, and trade unionists—were charged with conspiracy; the main charges were dropped and the defendants fined. The common repression to which communists and nationalists were subjected strengthened the relationship that had been forged during their tactical alliances, laying the basis for their post-war strategic alliance. Thus, while the PCA emerged from the war emaciated and generally scorned by Algerian nationalists, the CPSA had built a solid alliance with African nationalists.[12]

The Cold War and Wars of Liberation

The Second World War saw a spate of strikes across the African continent. After the war imperial powers increased their resource extraction to finance their own reconstruction, causing further labour unrest. In addition to Johannesburg, strikes erupted in Dakar, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, Bulawayo, Zanzibar, the Gold Coast, and Nigeria, and across the French West African and Sudanese railway systems.[13] The Cold War that began in 1946 proved an important ideological tool against left-wing activists who sought to make inroads amongst discontented groups. This was particularly so in South Africa, where the apartheid government used anti-communism to rationalize its repression of African nationalist aspirations and retain Western allies.

But the period was also marked by the weakening of imperial power, coupled with the rise of anti-colonial struggles. In Algeria and South Africa the trajectories of the two communist parties diverged even more as they were swept along by national developments. In South Africa the National Party's election on an apartheid platform in May 1948 brought greater repression. The CPSA's national conference in January 1949

claimed 2,482 members, but only 992 were in good financial standing. The leadership could not decide how to respond to the increasing repression and made no attempt to set up an underground. In June 1950 the Suppression of Communism Act—a South African manifestation of the Cold War—banned the CPSA and empowered the state to act against a wide range of critics. The CPSA's Central Committee disbanded the party, leaving members confused and demoralized.

Three years later the underground South African Communist Party (SACP) was formed. While the CPSA had prioritized class struggle, the SACP emphasized closer collaboration with the African nationalist movement, giving primacy to alliance politics over the development of an independent profile. Those who joined the SACP did so because of their desire to fight apartheid, and they were acculturated into an international communist world to which most remained uncritically loyal. Thus, when the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) criticized Stalin at its twentieth Congress in 1956, SACP stalwart Michael Harmel applauded the CPSU for condemning the cult of Stalin, while praising him for promoting economic development and fighting Trotskyism. The SACP's commitment to national liberation protected it from pressure to address its relationship with the USSR.

During its first seven years, the SACP issued no public statement. Instead, individual communists worked with the ANC and its allies in the Congress Alliance. The relationship of communists and nationalists was further strengthened by the Treason Trial of 1956–61, in which almost the entire Congress Alliance leadership was charged with treason and conspiracy to use violence—and eventually found not guilty. Several leading African nationalists joined the SACP at this time; overlapping membership at the leadership level was common. This close relationship had its critics; in 1959 discontented Africanists broke from the ANC citing white and communist domination and formed the Pan Africanist Congress. Yet that did not deter South African communists from claiming that they had merged with the national liberation movement. Following the March 1960 Sharpeville-Langa massacres, the government imposed repeated states of emergency, banning many political organizations and activists. Communists went underground and into exile, and communists and African nationalists jointly launched *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation) or MK as it was commonly known, to wage armed struggle.[14]

In Algeria, meanwhile, the PCA had rethought its approach to Algerian nationalism in the wake of the Sétif massacre and began campaigning in earnest against state repression. By the late 1940s young radicalized Algerians were gravitating to the PCA both because of the lack of tolerance within the nationalist movement—an intolerance that ultimately led to its destructive fragmentation—and because nationalist organizations did not offer an answer to the problems of poverty, inequality, and social justice. Reflecting this demographic change, alongside the pressure of a burgeoning national liberation movement, the PCA's policies became—with some exceptions—more autonomous vis-à-vis the PCF.

One consequence of anti-colonial agitation was an increase in the international flow of ideas about emancipation from colonial rule, as liberation movements sought to learn

from each other's experiences. Armed struggles in Tunisia and Morocco—and not least the Vietnamese victory over France at Dien Bien Phu in 1954—brought communists and nationalists face to face with the possibilities of guerrilla struggle in Algeria. Despite the PCA's support for the Vietnamese, it was slow to join the armed struggle launched by the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) in November 1954. But pushed by its rural activists, it formed its own armed detachments. While the FLN aimed to bring all Algerians into its fold, the PCA insisted on maintaining its organizational autonomy, although in July 1956 its armed detachments integrated into the FLN's *Armée de Libération Nationale*. Yet this failed to ease FLN scepticism towards communists, many of whom were killed during the war—both by the French and by Algerian nationalists.

As war swept across the Algerian landscape and into the cities, urban political organization became ever more difficult, accentuating the disjuncture between the cities and the countryside. Led by Bachir Hadj-Ali and Sadek Hadjerès inside the country and Larbi Bouhali in exile, the underground PCA contended that, however restricted, there was still public space for urban civil society organization and protest. However, the FLN's never-ending drive for unity and intolerance of organizational pluralism left little political space for the PCA. Pulled into the armed struggle, the PCA maintained its organizational autonomy from the FLN, while its programme showed increasing independence from the PCF.

The euphoria of independence notwithstanding, as the war ended the discord within the FLN erupted into the open. Despite factional violence, the idea of unity promulgated during the war as necessary for victory became a model for the new Algeria. The PCA, with its ranks depleted, could hardly contest this new state. While the FLN pursued state to state negotiations with the Soviet Union, it banned the PCA in November 1962 and proclaimed itself as the sole legal party the next year.[15]

Across Africa leaders of liberation struggles were in contact with each other. In March 1962 two ANC leaders met with FLN representatives. Later, South African communists met with Algerian communists. The lesson that the SACP drew from the PCA's fate was the need to strengthen its strategic alliance with the ANC. The lessons it drew from the FLN's experience were the need to build unity, to link town and countryside, to develop external bases from which to launch armed struggle, and to keep open the possibilities for negotiation.

Once again the West African experience was a significant counterpoint. In the post-war years communist influence in French West Africa was arguably greater than in the British colonies due to the coordinated work of the PCF and CGT and the PCF's provision of training in France. By Walter Kolarz's account, more Africans were schooled in Marxism in Paris than in Moscow, Peking, Prague, or Leipzig combined. French colonialism was far more concerned with culture and ideology than its British counterpart, and the PCF, far larger and better resourced than the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), was correspondingly more concerned with the diffusion of culture and ideas, despite its ambiguity on colonial independence. Thus, the West African *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA), an anti-colonial party formed in 1946 by the Ivory Coast's Félix Houphouët-Boigny, originally had links with the PCF. But in the

1950s, as the Cold War intensified, Houphouët-Boigny steered the RDA in a moderate direction.[16]

In British West Africa, Marxist ideas were more influential in Nigeria than its neighbours, presumably due to the larger labour movement. Nigerian Marxists sought support from the CPGB, which had both Nigerian and West African branches. But they were never strong enough to develop a mass base or form a Nigerian Communist Party, and in the 1950s Nigerian communists were banned from the civil service. Thus, despite scattered Marxist groups and influential individuals, communism remained extremely weak in this region.[17]

British Sudan, at the crossroads of Africa and the Arab world, was distinctive. Alongside nationalism, communist influence grew during the Second World War due to the combined influence of British communist soldiers and Sudanese students returning from Egypt who had links to Egyptian communists. In 1946 the Sudanese Movement for National Liberation was launched; this became the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) in 1949. The SCP rapidly broadened its base to include workers and peasants, was particularly strong amongst workers at the railway hub of Atbara and, as a result, was important in the anti-colonial movement that won independence in 1956.[18]

Post-Colonial Independence, African Socialism and Non-Alignment

Across Africa independence opened up new possibilities for communist influence. Capitalism was tarnished by its association with colonialism, and the USSR hoped that independent African countries would follow its model. It continued to offer education and training for people from developing countries through bodies such as the communist-aligned World Federation of Trade Unions and International Organization of Journalists, both headquartered in Prague. Stalin's death in 1953 had loosened Soviet dominance over the communist world, which, after the Chinese Revolution, was gradually becoming polycentric. Nonetheless, the six African communist parties represented at the CPSU's Twenty-Second Congress in October 1961 still looked to the USSR for guidance. These were Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, South Africa, Sudan, and Réunion (founded as a region of the PCF in 1946 and an autonomous party in 1959). Communists in Africa faced harsh conditions: only in Tunisia and Réunion were the parties legal, and Egypt's long-standing but fragmented communist movement was heavily repressed. Kolarz estimates some 50,000 communists in Africa around October 1961, but judging by SACP and PCA membership, this is highly exaggerated.[19]

Superpower competition intensified as both powers sought to pull newly independent countries into their orbit. But if African states were often sceptical of capitalism, they did not rush to adopt communism. To the consternation of African communists, a non-aligned African socialism became the dominant left-wing approach of the 1960s

and early 1970s. Its proponents agreed that Africa's pre-colonial communal values and relative absence of classes and class struggle should form the basis for an African path of development.

Although African socialism claimed to reflect pre-colonial values, it was applied to societies that had been markedly transformed by the colonial experience in divergent ways. Ghana, independent in 1957, became a beacon for African socialism. George Padmore, disillusioned with communism, moved there to work with Kwame Nkrumah, who in contrast to the rural orientation of most African socialists, stressed rapid industrialization. But Ghana quickly became heavily indebted. In 1964 Nkrumah declared himself president for life and banned opposition parties, only to be overthrown two years later, bringing Ghana's socialist experiment to a halt.[20]

Tanzania's Julius Nyerere promoted *ujamaa*, or familyhood, with the extended family as the building block of African development, and sought to reconcile social differences within a single party. He began the forced relocation of rural people into collective villages, which proved politically unpopular and economically non-viable.[21] A. M. Babu, an influential Zanzibari intellectual-activist imprisoned by Nyerere, wrote a harsh critique of African socialism, arguing that its architects perpetuated Africa's economic dependency. The doctrine was discredited both by its failed economic projects and by the repressive one-party regimes wielding power in its name.[22]

One-party states and military coups became common across Africa. Yet regional differences remained significant. Although not African socialist, Algeria's FLN styled itself as a left alternative to Soviet-style communism and a socialist beacon for the Third World, despite its hostility to independent socialist initiatives. Following the PCA's banning, the FLN crushed the Kabyle-based *Front des Forces Socialistes* (FFS) launched in September 1963. The military regime that seized power in June 1965 continued this hostility to autonomous socialist groups. The *Organisation de la Résistance Populaire* (ORP), formed after the coup by members of the banned PCA and leftists close to the deposed president Ahmed Ben Bella, was crushed within a few months. A successor organization, the *Parti de l'Avant-Garde Socialiste* (PAGS), was formed the next year. The PAGS continued the PCA's pro-Soviet orientation, seeing the regime's approach to the USSR as an anti-imperialist step. In 1971 the military regime took a left turn: first nationalizing Algeria's oil and gas reserves, then, over the next two years, collectivizing agriculture. The PAGS saw these as further positive moves. Many PAGS members and supporters worked in the public sector, and in the 1960s and 1970s the party was influential beyond its numbers. Nonetheless, it could hardly dent the military regime.[23]

Sudan suffered a similar fate. In 1969 Gaafar Nimeiri took power in a military coup and announced his decision to form a progressive one-party system. The SCP, which retained its strong labour base, refused to disband despite pressure both from the regime and the CPSU. It drew the lesson of Egyptian communists, who in 1965 had merged into Gamal Abdul Nasser's Arab Socialist Union. Thus, in 1970 it called for a national front of progressive organizations. In April 1971 communist leaders were arrested and in August hundreds of communists were executed. The USSR nonetheless maintained cordial

relations with Nimeiri, only reconsidering when he shifted his Cold War allegiances. Virtually decimated, only very gradually did the SCP begin to recover.[24]

Afrocommunism

The 1970s saw another left-wing wave as the People's Republic of the Congo, Benin, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique all espoused Marxism-Leninism and, in varying degrees, pursued closer ties with the USSR. The political climate was favourable to top-down socialist experiments. Mali made another attempt at socialism in the 1970s and 1980s, as did Ghana in the 1980s. Along with anti-authoritarian upheavals in Asia and Latin America, the events precipitated a rethink of US foreign policy—American policy-makers were concerned that the new regimes would be pro-Soviet—and an increase in US military involvement in the Third World. This intensified the Cold War, producing what Fred Halliday called the second Cold War.[25]

This can be seen in southern Africa, where struggles against settler colonialism and white minority rule became intertwined with Cold War ambitions. Alliance politics have been critical for southern African communists, who integrated themselves into armed liberation movements in Mozambique, Angola, and South Africa. Thus, some of Mozambique's and Angola's anti-colonial leaders had embraced communism as students in 1950s Portugal, but they were too few in number to form autonomous communist parties. Guinea Bissau's Amilcar Cabral, who studied in Portugal and visited Angola, played a pivotal role in spreading these networks across Lusophone Africa. They proved critical for the struggles against Portuguese colonialism. Both Mozambique's *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO) and Angola's *Movimento Popular da Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) gradually became socialist during the course of armed struggle and through contact with the USSR. Portugal's April 1974 military coup transformed the southern African political terrain, and Mozambique and Angola became independent in June and November 1975 respectively.[26]

What David Ottaway and Marina Ottaway have called Afrocommunism made significant headway in 1977, when Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Angola adopted Marxism-Leninism as their state ideology. Unlike other Soviet-aligned African states, they applied Marxism-Leninism as a state-led developmental paradigm. This entailed strengthening ties with the Soviet bloc, building a vanguard party, putting the economy under state control, and promoting industrialization and modernization—in contrast to African socialism's concern with tradition. In pursuing national interests and promoting socialism at their own pace, their approach was seen as an African counterpart to Eurocommunism. The Soviets did not take the assertions by these states of Marxism-Leninism at face value but nonetheless supported African countries seen as moving towards socialism. By 1980 the three countries had built political parties, organized peasants, and developed state farms.[27]

The Ottaways stress the commonalities of these regimes and seek to explain the subsequent divergences. The regimes had followed the same general approach—strong state-led development with a collectivist agenda. In 1982 they still embraced Marxism-Leninism, despite their striking dependence on foreign investment and aid, and had reorganized civil society through the formation of youth groups, women's associations, peasant associations, communal villages, and trade unions, all of which had the potential to cut across ethnic and cultural differences. Ethiopia, with its stratified class structure, had a skilled cadre to facilitate institutional development. In Mozambique and Angola, by contrast, the Portuguese settlers who had run the civil service left at independence. Not only did the two countries lack the capacity to pursue large-scale agricultural collectivization, they were torn apart by civil wars running from 1975 to 2002 in Angola and 1977 to 1992 in Mozambique. Indeed, by 1987, Marina Ottaway contends, Afrocommunism remained viable in Ethiopia, but was mired down in Mozambique and Angola, which were both rent by superpower rivalries involving the USSR, the US, and China.[28] Nonetheless, commonalities should not obscure significant differences: Mozambique's FRELIMO, influenced by Nyerere's model, retained more popular support than Angola's bureaucratic MPLA.

Unlike Mozambique and Angola, Ethiopia's left turn was not the result of an anti-colonial struggle. The country's social structure had barely been touched by its brief colonial experience decades earlier. Emperor Haile Selassie's regime collapsed in 1974 following a popular revolt from below. Only after mass executions of old-regime officials and Mengistu Haile Mariam's ascendancy in late 1974, did the military regime advocate socialism as a modernizing strategy. In 1975 it unleashed sweeping reforms—nationalization and abolition of private property. In contrast to southern Africa's guerrilla struggles, which reflected alliance politics, Ethiopia's military was isolated from the civilian left. In 1976 Mengistu proclaimed 'scientific socialism' and began distancing himself from the US. Late that year he launched the Red Terror—the mass slaughter of Marxist civilians. The USSR finally threw its weight behind Mengistu after his February 1977 coup—although the Red Terror only ended in 1978 with the elimination of all opposition to Mengistu. The Horn of Africa became embroiled in Cold War politics, as Somalia's military regime expelled the Soviets and embraced the Americans. Thus, while Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Angola all pursued state-led socialism, they took different routes.[29]

Cold War Rivalries in Southern Africa

The independence of Mozambique and Angola had important inspirational and practical repercussions for the South African liberation struggle. The SACP's early armed actions ended in July 1963 with the arrest of MK's top leaders. By November 1965, with its key activists imprisoned or in exile, the SACP ceased functioning as an organized body within South Africa.

The SACP's external wing assumed leadership, setting up headquarters in London, with Moses Kotane as general secretary. Exile strengthened the party's relationship with the Eastern Bloc countries, undoubtedly due to financial dependence; its response to the 1968 Czechoslovakian crisis was uncritically pro-Soviet. It hoped to infiltrate MK troops trained in African and Eastern European countries back into South Africa. But repeated military failures compelled the ANC to convene a conference at Morogoro, Tanzania, in April–May 1969. The ANC's executive resigned *en bloc*; communists formed the majority of the new executive. MK was put under the supervision of a 'revolutionary council' that answered to the new executive and that included three non-African Communists.

From the SACP's perspective, the Morogoro conference was a success. Senior communist Joe Slovo had drafted most of the ANC's *Strategies and Tactics* document, and the conference strengthened the political alliance of the SACP, ANC, MK, and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). Yet, although communists were well placed in the ANC and MK, the party itself was not functioning as a collective entity. It hoped to launch a 'people's war' combining armed struggle with mass mobilization, but the difficulty of infiltrating troops precluded this.[30]

Meanwhile, popular resistance inside South Africa was growing, signalled by the growth of the black consciousness and black trade-union movements and the 1976 Soweto uprising. Communists figured prominently amongst exiled SACTU leaders, and the SACP was antagonistic toward the new trade-union movement. Moreover, diverse socialist currents were challenging the SACP's position on the left. The party was cautiously critical. In 1977 the SACP moved its headquarters to Luanda, Angola—closer to home.

Yet the armed struggle was stymied. The 1984 Nkomati Accord between Mozambique and South Africa precluded MK access to Mozambique and intensified the pressure on MK troops in Angola. More discontent within MK ranks—culminating in a mutiny in Angola—propelled another ANC conference in June 1985 at Kabwe, Zambia. The Kabwe conference stressed the need to broaden the armed struggle into a 'people's war' and fully opened ANC membership to all South Africans, irrespective of ethnicity—another SACP victory.

Within South Africa popular pressure against apartheid escalated dramatically during the 1980s, a decade of intense socialist ideological debate. The 1984–5 Vaal uprising fed into left-wing debates about community and workplace struggles, while the massive growth of the anti-capitalist labour movement led to the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in December 1985. Pragmatically, the SACP wooed COSATU leaders, and after concerted political battles, COSATU aligned itself with the ANC and the SACP. By the late 1980s the party had absorbed a range of left-wing intellectuals into its ranks, and its banners were seen in the seemingly unstoppable mass demonstrations taking place around the country. The 1987–8 battle of Cuito Cuanavale in Angola signalled a shift in the regional balance of power, forcing South Africa to withdraw from Angola and rethink its strategy. When the SACP held its seventh congress in Havana, Cuba, in April 1989, it raised the spectre that the South African ruling class would prematurely push the liberation movement into negotiations. The

party continued to stress armed struggle, an organized underground, mass action, and international pressure.[31]

At the continent's northern end, another democratic movement was rapidly evolving. A conjuncture of events from October 1988 produced what has been called the first Arab spring, when popular uprisings in Algeria compelled the one-party state to introduce multi-party democratic elections. Sixty-five percent of the eligible voters turned out for the June 1990 municipal and provincial elections. These proved a major defeat for the FLN, which polled 28 percent of the vote, and a calamity for the PAGS, which obtained only 0.3 per cent; the FFS had called for an electoral boycott. The Islamist *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) obtained 54 per cent of the vote, signalling a profound desire for change. But before the Parliamentary elections had been completed, a military coup in January 1992 aborted the democratic transition. Martial law was followed by a decade of civil war.[32]

The Soviet Collapse and its Impact on Communism in Africa

The Algerian events overlapped with the tumultuous developments in Eastern Europe. The popular uprisings of August–September 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall that November, and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union two years later had dramatic repercussions across Africa. A succession of leftist regimes—Ethiopia, People's Republic of the Congo, Benin, Angola, Mozambique, and Zambia—either lost power or dramatically shifted their policies.

But African responses to the collapse of international communism were varied and complex, reflecting the interactions of national and global dynamics. By the mid-1980s IMF and World Bank structural adjustment programs had already undermined socialist ambitions for collectivization and redistribution. Tanzania, Mozambique, and Algeria, for example, all yielded to international pressures for economic liberalization. External economic pressure undermined left-wing regimes, but domestic pressures were critical. Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique all faced significant internal dissent and guerrilla struggle based on rival claims to power. But with Mikhail Gorbachev advocating reconciliation rather than military confrontation to resolve local conflicts, Soviet support declined, and the three countries were compelled to switch gears. In Algeria the PAGS dissolved in late 1992, in part a response to its electoral failure, in part to the collapse of communism. Some of its members formed the left-wing and anti-Islamist *Ettahaddi* (Defiance). Others, trying to retain the communist tradition, formed the *Parti Algérien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme*. Civil society has revived in the twenty-first century, and there is a fragile and fragmented socialist movement.[33]

The Eastern European events finally propelled the SACP to confront its relationship with the Soviet Union. It did so with astonishing rapidity. Slovo's *Has Socialism Failed?*,

published in January 1990, criticized Stalinism for bureaucratic and authoritarian leadership that restricted power to a tiny elite and stripped socialism of democracy. But he nonetheless believed that socialism could function democratically without the 'distortions' that characterized the Soviet Union.

With the Cold War ending, the prospects for a negotiated democratic transition seemed more likely, and in February 1990 the South African government unbanned the ANC, PAC, and SACP. It stepped up pressure on the ANC to suspend armed struggle and to distance itself from the SACP. An uncovered ANC underground initiative was portrayed in the press as a communist plot, and President F. W. de Klerk tried—unsuccessfully—to keep the SACP out of negotiations. In July 1990 the SACP was relaunched as a legal organization; in August the ANC agreed to suspend armed struggle.

The SACP, ANC, and COSATU formalized their relationship through a Tripartite Alliance. By December 1991 the SACP claimed over twenty-one thousand members, with strong concentrations in the country's industrial areas. Its leadership included MK heroes and leading COSATU trade unionists. The USSR's collapse was traumatic for many members; the party's manifesto argued that international conditions made the prospects for socialism unlikely and that the working class had to maintain a 'strategic initiative' during negotiations. Despite enormous strains, not least the assassination of SACP general secretary Chris Hani in 1993, the country's first democratic elections took place in April 1994.

The SACP is amongst the very few communist parties to have survived the Soviet Union's collapse relatively unscathed. It has done so precisely because of its long commitment to the ANC and its role in the armed struggle. Although the party retains its membership in the Tripartite Alliance with the aim of influencing government policy, its close relationship with the ANC has left COSATU as the government's most vocal critic. Despite being Africa's strongest communist party, the SACP does not feel confident to contest elections on its own ticket, and its leaders prefer a comfortably close relationship with the ANC rather than the uncertainty of an independent profile. Its membership in the Tripartite Alliance has come at the cost of a distinct communist political agenda.

However, the SACP is playing a leading role in the African Left Networking Forum, launched in Johannesburg in August 2008 with the aim of building a Marxist-Leninist network in Africa. Its first conference took place in Johannesburg in August 2010 and included Sudanese communists and representatives from left-wing groups in Botswana, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somaliland, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zambia. Africa has a diverse range of independent socialist groups, but communists are striving to retain the communist tradition, while building continent-wide links.[34]

Although communist movements in Africa have generally been weak, they have periodically had an influence far beyond their numbers, especially in southern Africa. Nonetheless, while communists and socialists have made episodic gains during socially turbulent periods, they have usually been unable to capitalize on these gains in multiparty elections. With the exceptions of the anti-colonial guerrilla movements in Angola and Mozambique—which had Soviet support—communist-oriented movements have never gained state power. However, communism was adopted by a significant number of states

as an official ideology to promote economic development and facilitate international alliances. While state-led communist and socialist initiatives have been undemocratic and repressive, they form a subset of African one-party states that span the ideological spectrum. For socialist movements to gain ground, they must address democratic demands. Significantly, these movements are now operating in the absence of a global socialist power.

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PART IV

COMMUNIST POLITIES AND ECONOMIES

CHAPTER 17

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN COMMUNIST STATES

BALÁZS SZALONTAI

Introduction

As Martin Mevius aptly remarked, it is a 'popular myth' that 'nationalism and communism are wholly antagonistic and mutually exclusive'.[1] Yet a fusion of the two was hardly ever a smooth process. From the beginning, communist foreign policies were torn between ideas of internationalism and nationalism. On the one hand, the Bolshevik revolution, like the French and Iranian revolutions, was based on a universalist ideology that its followers deemed to be widely applicable. Consequently, desires and fears of an 'export of revolution' were far stronger in the wake of these three revolutions than after the essentially nation-centric revolutions of 1910 and 1911 in Mexico and China. In particular, the Soviet practice of creating client 'people's republics' abroad—which started in Mongolia as early as 1921—had much in common with the twenty-plus 'sister republics' that revolutionary France established in the occupied European countries in the second half of the 1790s. The internationalist component of its ideology allowed the new Soviet regime to disassociate itself from the old fixations of tsarist diplomacy and initiate an unprecedented alliance with Turkey, yet at the same time to involve itself in revolutionary activities in regions far beyond Russia's traditional geopolitical spheres of interest, such as Latin America and South East Asia.

On the other hand, following the Romanian and Polish annexation of Bessarabia, Western Ukraine, and West Belarus, the USSR was, at least potentially, an irredentist power. Pursuing a sophisticated nationalities policy of indigenization (*korenizatsiia*), Soviet leaders were aware that divided ethnic groups could play the role of a 'Piedmont' both in respect of Soviet designs on neighbouring states and in respect of the anti-Soviet designs of hostile powers. Due to its conflicting political objectives,

the Kremlin often vacillated between supporting ethnic separatism and eschewing it, until the Second World War enabled it to annex the disputed territories. The new borders of the post-1945 USSR were drawn partly in accordance with ethnic principles and partly on the basis of continuity with the tsarist empire, but hardly in the spirit of internationalism. Just as Soviet ethnic minorities were expected to accept the leadership of the Russian nation, the communist regimes created in neighbouring countries were expected to subordinate their own national interests to Soviet ambitions.

This combination of ideological and irredentist expansionism gave rise to the idea that Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe constituted a new empire, rather than a 'socialist commonwealth' (as the Kremlin preferred to call it). Such views were expressed not only in older publications inspired by theories of totalitarianism but also more recently by scholars such as László Borhi, Prasenjit Duara, Andrew C. Janos, Vojtech Mastny, Alexander J. Motyl, and Vladislav Zubok, who called the Soviet bloc a 'revolutionary empire' (Janos), a 'totalitarian empire' (Motyl), an 'empire by imposition' (Mastny), and an 'empire by coercion' (Borhi).[2]

This chapter aims to broaden the scope of the aforesaid analyses by investigating the relations not only between the USSR and its East European 'satellites' but also between other communist states, such as China, North Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Mongolia. It partly relies on the typologies of empire used by Alexander Motyl, Robert S. Santley, and Rani T. Alexander,[3] but seeks to refine Motyl's concept of 'totalitarian empire' by making occasional comparisons between communist and fascist practices of domination. Instead of regarding the principles of 'internationalism' and 'national sovereignty' as mere rhetorical devices to conceal the imperial nature of communist foreign policies, it argues that the relations between the various communist states were influenced by both internationalist and nationalist conceptions.

Export of Repression versus Export of De-Stalinization

In the light of the emphasis that theories of totalitarianism placed on the role of terror in communist regimes, it is worth starting our analysis of communist imperial policies with the subject of repression. The repressive acts that communist regimes committed in controlled (but non-annexed) foreign states reflected the fact that communist ideology was based not on the idea of racial superiority/inferiority but on internationalist concepts. Under fascist-type regimes and 'classical' colonial administrations, the political restrictions that colonized populations had to endure were usually distinctly harsher than the conditions in the core countries (even if the latter were ruled by dictatorships). However, there was no such pattern in communist practices of domination. In some peripheral states, the magnitude of Stalinist repression was fully comparable to the

Great Terror, whereas in others the number of victims remained far lower. For instance, in Choibalsan's Mongolia as many as 20,396 persons were executed for political reasons in 1937–9, and the simultaneous purges carried out by Sheng Shicai in Soviet-dominated Xinjiang seem to have been on a comparable scale. In contrast, in Stalinist Hungary the number of political executions reached about 500 in 1946–56; in Czechoslovakia, 178 in 1948–52; and in Romania, 137 in 1945–64.[4] Since neither Stalin nor Choibalsan reverted to the policy of mass executions after 1945, these wide divergencies in the scale of terror probably reflected different phases of Soviet policy, i.e. the extreme severity of the purges in Mongolia and Xinjiang resulted from their synchronization with the Great Terror, whereas the 'selective repression' in Eastern Europe corresponded to the policy practised by Stalin in 1943–53. In the light of these examples, it is justified to describe the Stalinist repression perpetrated in the peripheries as an 'export of terror' (a term coined by Claudia Weber), rather than as a discriminatory system devised specifically for the purpose of expansion and colonization.[5]

In the post-Stalin era, the 'export of terror' was replaced by an 'export of de-Stalinization' (1953–62), during which the Kremlin compelled most East European leaders to re-examine the earlier show trials, and release a number of political prisoners. The consequences of this were again diverse. In Eastern Europe Moscow was never prepared to allow the 'satellites' to abandon the Soviet model altogether, as the suppression of the East German uprising (1953), the Hungarian revolution (1956), and the Prague Spring (1968) showed. On the other hand, the Kremlin's failure to maintain a grip over China, Albania, and North Korea enabled these regimes to pursue domestic policies that were more, rather than less, repressive than contemporaneous Soviet practice.[6]

Inter-Party Control versus Military Occupation

The 'internationalist' system of relations between ostensibly independent communist parties was crucial to the maintenance of Soviet control over Eastern Europe and Mongolia, as well as to Vietnam's exercise of hegemony over the communist movement in Indochina. It distinguished communist states from fascist practices of domination, for in the East European countries formally allied with the Third Reich, the Nazis cooperated with the existing authoritarian regimes, bringing the local fascist parties to power only when other options failed. The communist system of control was Janus-faced. If it operated smoothly, it enabled the core state to act as an efficient informal empire, in which, according to Motyl's definition, the appointment and dismissal of peripheral elites was influenced but not formally conducted by the core elite. That is, the dominant communist power could oust a recalcitrant peripheral leader without the need to inspire a military coup, stage an assassination, or launch an invasion.[7] Thus Gomulka (1948), Chervenkov (1956), Rákosi (1956), Ulbricht (1971), and Tsedenbal (1984) were all

simply forced to resign by their fellow Politburo members who followed a signal from the Kremlin (although they often also had their own motives for doing so). But if this system of inter-party influence did not function (as occurred in Moscow's conflicts with Tito, Mao, Hoxha, and Kim Il Sung), the core state—unable to find alternative pressure groups in the monolithic party-state now under the control of its opponents—often had no other option but to invade the peripheral country or accept its inability to engineer regime change.

The military option appeared feasible in some cases. Moscow permanently stationed divisions in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Afghanistan, as did Hanoi in Laos and Cambodia. These could be used to suppress local resistance movements. Elsewhere, however, the presence of Soviet ground forces was of a temporary nature (Tuva: 1921–9; Mongolia: 1921–5, 1932, 1937–56, 1967–91; Bulgaria: 1944–7; Romania: 1944–58; North Korea: 1945–8; Czechoslovakia: 1968–91). But even in the absence of military units, Soviet or Vietnamese advisers instituted a form of direct political control, enabling Stalin, for example, to organize murderous purges in Tuva, Mongolia, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia. By contrast, where communist states hosted no Soviet ground forces (Yugoslavia, Albania, China, North Korea, and post-1958 Romania) these countries were eventually able to break free from the USSR. This suggests that in the last analysis the core communist states functioned more like territorial empires which, according to the definition of Santley and Alexander, dominate the periphery by means of a military presence, and not as informal empires, where dominance is based more on the threat of armed force. Nonetheless, military intervention, though widely used to bring subordinate communist parties to power, was never the preferred option of Moscow and Hanoi to deal with established communist regimes. On the contrary, it was a sign of crisis, a measure to be taken only when inter-party communication channels no longer functioned—either because the other party was controlled by an intractable hard-line leadership (Pol Pot's Cambodia, 1978), or was seriously disrupted by factional struggles (Afghanistan, 1979), or was unable or unwilling to maintain a strong grip over society (Mongolia, 1932; East Germany, 1953; Hungary and Poland, 1956; Czechoslovakia, 1968; and Afghanistan, 1979).[8] That military domination was not primary is also suggested by the fact that during the Stalin era Soviet ground forces were stationed in the four Eastern European countries that had been in military conflict with the USSR during the Second World War, whereas they were absent from Albania, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia.

State Sovereignty versus Demographic Expansion

The absence of a self-proclaimed link between population policy and external expansion distinguished communist practices of domination from those of fascist-type regimes. The leaders of the Third Reich, Fascist Italy, and military-dominated Japan all

advocated pro-natalist policies on the grounds that high demographic growth was an essential precondition of military power and 'racial virility', even as they also insisted that population pressure threatened the economic sustainability of the regime. They thus sought to resolve this dilemma by a method frequently used by territorial empires, namely, the creation of settler colonies in Eastern Europe, Africa, and North East Asia, that is, in regions well beyond the areas they sought to annex on ethnic grounds. Communist states whose demographic and military conditions would have allowed them to pursue a similar policy vis-à-vis their weaker neighbours usually refrained from this course of action, both in propaganda and practice. Ideologically, under the influence of Marx's critique of Thomas Malthus's population theory, they rejected the alarmist scenarios that were assumed to follow from demographic expansion, tending to see population growth as a manageable problem. In 1949, for instance, Mao Zedong, having dismissed the Malthusian argument as 'absurd', declared: 'It is a very good thing that China has a large population. Even if China's population multiplies many times, she is fully capable of finding a solution.'[9] The Chinese case, however, reminds us that this anti-Malthusian stance could inspire pro-natalist policies which, influenced as they were by military considerations and backed up by coercive measures, showed certain similarities with fascist practices.[10] The connection between pro-natalist policies and national defence seems to have been strongest in the USSR (1936–55) and in post-1953 North Korea, both of which had experienced massive demographic collapses before their leaders fully embraced pro-natalism, not least by prohibiting abortion. In general, however, the desire to build military power by means of active pro-natalist policies was not perceived to entail the creation of settler colonies abroad. One reason for this may have been the spatial distribution of the Soviet and Chinese populations, which had little in common with densely populated Germany, Italy, or Japan. It was the vast, sparsely populated areas of Siberia, Central Asia, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang that became the destination of state-induced (and often coercive) migration waves both before and during the communist era.

Still, the evident readiness of Stalin and Mao to use massive population transfers for purposes of political control within their respective national boundaries raises the question as to why this method was not used to reinforce Soviet domination over Eastern Europe, Mongolia, and pre-1942 Xinjiang in the same way as the Third Reich and imperial Japan had aspired to do in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the General Government of Poland, Manchukuo, and elsewhere. Another factor may have been that communist leaders, unlike their Nazi and Japanese counterparts, seem to have favoured policies based on clear-cut definitions of state sovereignty rather than on a hotchpotch of colonial and semi-colonial structures whose legal status hovered between outright annexation and the fiction of full sovereignty. The subordinate status of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia or the absence of a nationality law in Manchukuo, for example, created a legal gateway for the immigration of settlers from the core countries. Probably this, too, is a reason why immigrants did not follow in the footsteps of Soviet troops and advisers in migrating to the 'outer empire' (Eastern Europe, Mongolia, and Xinjiang), and why in the Tuvan People's Republic the number of Russian settlers—whose earlier

influx had played a decisive role in the tsarist takeover of Tuva—did not increase significantly during the period of de facto Soviet rule (1921–44), undergoing an explosive growth only after the country's annexation.[11]

Nevertheless, ambiguous situations did exist. In 1944–6, for instance, the Kremlin suddenly granted Soviet citizenship to 120,000 Russian and Central Asian exiles living in Xinjiang, presumably as a means of putting temporary pressure on the Guomindang government. However, in June 1949, Stalin advised the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to settle a large number of Han Chinese in Xinjiang, and in 1954, the USSR agreed to repatriate the majority of Soviet nationals from the region.[12] In Vietnamese-occupied Cambodia, Hanoi basically condoned a massive influx of Vietnamese migrants, but it seems not to have managed this migration in the same systematic way that it had pursued internal colonization in the minority-inhabited areas of Central Vietnam. From the 1960s Hanoi tried to curb demographic growth. After 1979, emigration to Cambodia from Vietnam, overpopulated and ridden with unemployment, went largely unregulated, many emigrants being economic refugees or even criminals wanted by the Vietnamese police, and neither citizenship nor the right to own land were at issue.[13]

Economic Domination versus Economic Nationalism

In the field of international economic relations, communist strategies of domination were also substantially different from the policies of fascism or 'classical' colonialism. To be sure, direct resource extraction from the occupied states, such as the Soviet dismantling of factories in Eastern Europe and Vietnam's acquisition of Cambodia's raw materials at below-market prices, did occur on a significant scale. Apart from the obvious financial benefits, this reinforced the core state's control over the peripheral areas, and prevented the latter from forging links with alternative economic partners.[14] Nevertheless, these measures did not constitute a long-term policy of forcible deindustrialization akin to the Nazi *Generalplan Ost*. The central role ascribed to industrialization in communist doctrine, combined with strategic concerns, meant that the Soviet policy of removing industrial plants from Eastern Europe was only a short-term measure. In the longer term, Stalinist Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria, all allocated more than 70 per cent of industrial investment to heavy industry, the most privileged sector of a Soviet-type economy, despite marked differences in their relative capacities.[15] In this respect, the Kremlin's decision to impose industrialization on its East European periphery had more in common with the policies of military-dominated Japan after 1931 when it sought to develop heavy and chemical industries in Manchukuo, Korea, and Taiwan. Military considerations played a crucial role in the Soviet-enforced industrialization of Eastern Europe, as a buffer region separating the USSR from its NATO adversaries. In 1951, Stalin's decision to launch a rapid military build-up in

Eastern Europe led to a dramatic increase in the industrial plan targets of the 'people's democracies'.[16] By contrast, the Soviet dictator found it less pressing to stimulate industrialization in the Asian communist states. On the contrary, he repeatedly advised Mao not to pursue too radical economic policies.[17]

This emphasis on heavy industrialization, like the earlier phase of crude exploitation, proved only temporary. From the mid-1950s, aware of the adverse effects of Stalin's autarkic policies, Khrushchev started to prod the Eastern European states to adopt more specialized roles in the 'socialist international division of labour'. From a Ricardian perspective of comparative advantage, it certainly appeared rational to entrust East Germany and Czechoslovakia with the task of producing sophisticated industrial equipment, and encourage the less developed 'people's democracies' to concentrate on sectors based on their rich natural resources, such as petroleum and gas chemistry (Romania), agriculture and mining (Albania), mining and metallurgy (North Korea), and livestock farming (Mongolia). Still, this plan, instead of reinforcing internationalist cooperation, provoked economic nationalism in those peripheral communist states that were unwilling to accept the roles the core assigned to them.[18] This was hardly surprising, given that Leninist-Stalinist doctrine suggested that if a country lacked a heavy-industrial sector its credibility as a full-fledged socialist economy was questionable. This is why in 1961 the Mongolian leadership declared the planned construction of a blast furnace, which Khrushchev considered uneconomical and had managed to scuttle, a 'political issue'. Still clinging to the project in the late 1980s—at which time Gorbachev similarly rebuffed their requests—the Mongolian leaders finally managed to persuade Japan to build the furnace in the city that had been selected for this purpose in 1960.[19] Predictably, such manifestations of Soviet unhelpfulness, even if they were motivated by reasonable economic arguments, provoked suspicions that Moscow wanted to perpetuate the inferior status of the peripheral states by preventing them from creating a diversified economic structure. While the Mongolian leaders confined their criticism to confidential talks, their Albanian, Romanian, and North Korean comrades publicly expressed their discontent. Kim Il Sung and Ceauşescu even introduced major modifications into communist theories about the nation so as to justify their independent course.

The anomalies of the controlled price system that existed in the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) also stimulated economic nationalism. In the commercial transactions between socialist countries, raw materials were often—though not always—sold below world market prices, whereas mechanical equipment could be disproportionately expensive. For instance, in 1972 North Korea had to sell 8 metric tons of zinc to purchase a Soviet-made Volga car, while a Mercedes would have cost only 5 tons. No wonder that the North Koreans felt cheated by their 'fraternal' partners, and started to export their valuable minerals to Japan at higher prices.[20] Still, these anomalies were not invariably disadvantageous to the peripheral states. For instance, the USSR usually purchased Cuban sugar at well above world prices.[21] Owing to the prominence of raw materials in Soviet exports (an unusual phenomenon in core–periphery economic interactions), the terms of trade between Moscow and the more industrialized East

European states underwent substantial fluctuation. In some periods, such as the late 1960s, they certainly turned against Moscow.[22] What made the system biased in favour of the USSR was the Kremlin's capacity to manipulate it for political ends. For example, in the wake of the 1973/9 oil crises, Moscow refused to sell oil to independent-minded Romania and North Korea at preferential prices, but provided loyal Bulgaria with large amounts of cheap oil for re-export.[23]

The Soviet model of integration, despite its promises of industrialization and the massive amounts of aid provided to the poorest 'people's democracies', tended to perpetuate, rather than eliminate resource dependency—a problem usually associated with capitalism—in Albania, North Korea, Cuba, Mongolia, and Indochina. While Bulgaria's participation in Comecon brought about a substantial structural transformation, its shift from agricultural to industrial exports (mainly transport equipment and computer parts) merely modified the form of dependency. For Sofia's guaranteed access to the vast Soviet market, combined with the relative lack of competition within Comecon, acted as a disincentive to develop high-quality industrial products that would be marketable outside the USSR.[24] Nonetheless, the fact that in 1963 the East European leaders successfully thwarted Khrushchev's attempt to introduce supranational planning in Comecon indicates that the charges of Soviet colonialism were overstated. The principle of national sovereignty so influenced the operation of Comecon in the post-Stalin era that until the early 1970s, the organization rarely managed to gain the required consent of every member state to any given joint project, and thereafter it preferred to allow dissenting members to opt out of a project so as not to face their veto.[25] Enver Hoxha's acerbic words colourfully illustrate the less-than-internationalist atmosphere of some Comecon meetings:

> Ulbricht, Novotny, Ochab, Dej, Kádár, Gomulka, Cyrankiewicz, Zhivkov, and the others, were at one another's throats; each of them complained that he was in dire straits; … they tried to dodge their obligations and to grab as much as possible at the expense of others. Meanwhile Khrushchev or his envoys would get up, deliver lectures on the 'socialist division of labour', support one or the other, according to their own interests in a given situation, and demand 'unity' and 'understanding' in the 'socialist family'.[26]

Intra-Bloc Conflicts versus Internationalist Brotherhood

These scenes revealed that in the Soviet bloc, the disruptive potential of nationalism was by no means directed solely against the USSR. On the contrary, the deeply rooted nationalist conflicts between the peripheral states, most of which had ethnic minorities linked to one or other neighbouring country, proved so persistent that the Kremlin

could not afford to ignore them. The very same communist leaders who readily professed their internationalist loyalty to the USSR were often most unwilling to make concessions to another peripheral communist state in matters of national interest, lest they be seen as unpatriotic.[27] While the Soviets were not averse to a policy of divide and rule, the principles of internationalism and national sovereignty—combined with the need to maintain intra-bloc harmony—precluded the option of granting long-term, institutionalized privileges to one nation-state at the expense of another, in the way the Habsburg emperors or colonial officials had once relied on certain selected ethnic groups or 'martial races'. Hitler, anxious as he was to play Hungary and Romania against each other, found it sufficient to prevent an armed conflict between his quarrelling allies and made no effort to make them love each other. In contrast, the Soviet leaders eventually felt it necessary to enforce at least a modicum of 'internationalist brotherhood' between the peripheral states, even against their wishes. Far from being a withdrawal from empire (as Motyl's thesis of 'disassemblage' would imply[28]), the Stalinist policy commanding the peripheries to engage with each other constituted an effort to reinforce imperial control. As early as January 1945, Stalin warned his Yugoslav allies to moderate their territorial ambitions.[29] Similarly, in 1946–7 he impatiently urged the reluctant Czechoslovak and Polish leaders to set aside their disagreements over Silesia, and conclude a treaty of mutual assistance.[30]

The emergence of the bipolar order of the Cold War created new complications in the Kremlin's oscillations between nationalism and internationalism. On the one hand, in 1949–54 Soviet diplomacy sought to torpedo West European plans for economic and political integration (which it labelled a form of cosmopolitanism) by appealing to local nationalist sentiment. At certain times, the Soviets emphasized the threat that a resurgence of West German militarism posed to France; at other times, they openly took a pro-German stance in the disputes over the Saarland and the Dutch–West German boundary.[31] On the other hand, Moscow became increasingly impatient with those manifestations of nationalism that could destabilize its own 'outer empire'. Thanks to Soviet pressure, the German Democratic Republic and Poland signed a treaty in 1950 recognizing the long-disputed Oder–Neisse border; while in 1952, reluctant Romanian leaders finally established a Hungarian Automous Region.[32] In 1949–50, Stalin arbitrated between Choibalsan, who persistently sought to incorporate Chinese-held Inner Mongolia into Mongolia, and Mao, who wished to reannex Mongolia. Stalin rejected both plans, leaving neither leader satisfied.[33] Such deeply-rooted nationalist enmities could not be transformed by fiat into internationalist brotherhood. Under the surface of public harmony, discord (what Sheldon Anderson aptly described as 'a Cold War in the Soviet bloc', in the case of relations between Poland and the German Democratic Republic) continued to exist. Paradoxically, in Czechoslovakia and Romania it was Stalinist terror that enforced certain long-denied minority rights, whereas in the post-Stalin era, these rights were gradually reversed as nationalism became a major source of legitimation for the regimes of Husák, Gheorghiu-Dej, and Ceauşescu.

Disloyal Hegemons versus Ambitious Peripheral Leaders

If intra-bloc disputes carried the risk of destabilization, this was doubly true for those situations where the Kremlin failed to support the territorial ambitions of a communist ally against a non-bloc state. From Moscow's perspective, the reluctance of a peripheral state to subordinate its own aspirations to Soviet global policy was a sign of narrow-minded nationalism, whereas from the viewpoint of the peripheral state, Soviet unwillingness to take the side of a communist ally against a non-bloc state often appeared as a betrayal of socialist internationalism. To be sure, unresolved territorial disputes with a neighbouring country did not necessarily alienate a peripheral state from Moscow. On the contrary, they could even generate requests for incorporation into the Soviet Union. Such appeals from Mongolia and Bulgaria may not have been manifestations of slavish adherence to socialist internationalism (as their detractors claimed) so much as a peculiar form of competition with other states for Soviet favour. In September 1949, Choibalsan told Stalin that in case of unification with Inner Mongolia, the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) might join the Soviet Union. Yet the next year, he vetoed a new proposal for incorporation made by a group of Mongolian party leaders, having failed to gain Stalin's support for his territorial claim against China.[34] Similarly, the Zhivkov regime made requests in 1963 and 1973—it is unclear how far these were in earnest—that Bulgaria be incorporated into the USSR, both times because Sofia, having engaged in bitter polemics with Belgrade over Macedonia, feared a Soviet–Yugoslav reconciliation at its own expense. In 1963, following the Russian patriarch's recognition of the autonomy of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Bulgarian leaders openly declared that there was no 'historic Macedonian nation'.[35] In the post-Stalin era, Bulgaria calculated that a policy of unswerving loyalty to the Kremlin would ensure that it remained more valuable than non-aligned Yugoslavia or NATO-affiliated Greece. By contrast, Albania, too small to outcompete its Balkan rivals, shifted from exaggerated displays of loyalty to Moscow in 1948–53 to exaggerated displays of loyalty to Beijing in the 1960s, only to break violently with each when Tirana concluded that its loyalty was not sufficiently appreciated.

In reality, the reluctance of a core communist state to support the nationalist aspirations of a peripheral one was far more likely to create tension than to inspire requests for incorporation. Kim Il Sung's preoccupation with Korean unification, for example, frequently clashed with the diplomatic priorities of the post-Stalin Soviet leadership. In 1960 an East German delegation visited Pyongyang to 'make the leading Korean comrades understand that today the main threat to peace is not in the Far East but . . . in West Germany', while in August 1970 Soviet Politburo member Kirill Mazurov, overriding Kim's objections, declared that it better suited Soviet interests to cooperate with Japan than to confront it.[36] Similarly, the Khmer Rouge felt extremely aggrieved after the

Vietnamese communists signed the Geneva and Paris agreements without wresting any concessions for their Cambodian comrades, and likewise after Moscow failed to recognize Norodom Sihanouk's government in exile following Lon Nol's coup.[37] Such internecine conflicts were most dramatically exposed in the Soviet–Yugoslav and Sino-Soviet splits, not least because both Yugoslavia and China had aspirations for regional hegemony. Stalin was reluctant to give full support to Tito in respect of Trieste, Carinthia, the planned Balkan federation, the Greek insurgency, and Albania. Similarly, Khrushchev proved unwilling to side with China against India, and sought rapprochement with Washington regardless of Mao's objections.[38] These two major conflicts revealed how far Belgrade and Beijing were prepared to go in subordinating the principle of socialist internationalism to national interests, each eventually cooperating with the Western powers against the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia became a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, while China tried first to compete with Moscow for leadership of the global communist movement, and then proclaimed its commitment to a non-ideological 'independent foreign policy'.

Chinese versus Vietnamese Ambitions for Domination

China's post-1963 attempt to establish an alternative communist universe produced a network very different from the Soviet bloc, which Beijing denounced as a tool of the Kremlin's 'social-imperialism'. The communist states which cooperated with China at one time or another—Albania, Romania, North Korea, North Vietnam, and Pol Pot's Cambodia—did not establish an institutionalized framework for multilateral collaboration. Unlike the Albanians who proposed a more formal alliance, the CCP leaders preferred to deal with their allies on a bilateral basis, presenting themselves as champions of smaller countries' right to pursue independent and self-reliant policies. In any case, the divergent national interests of the pro-China peripheral states constituted an obstacle to multilateralism. Romania played a major role in the Sino-US rapprochement—the latter welcomed initially even by Pyongyang—whereas the Albanian and Vietnamese leaders considered it a betrayal of socialist internationalism.[39] Ceauşescu saw no reason to confront the US as aggressively as North Korea, while Albania resented Romania as a competitor for Chinese aid.[40] The North Korean–Cambodian partnership was the only one to survive the crises of the 1970s and 1980s without serious tension.

Geographical distance also worked against cohesion. During the 1960s and 1970s, China lacked the military capability to project its power beyond the contiguous areas of its 'outer empire' (North Korea, Vietnam, and northern Laos), and was therefore unable to offer effective protection to its distant Albanian, Romanian, and Cambodian allies. To overcome this obstacle, China could only propose cooperation between Yugoslavia, Romania, and Albania and between Cambodia and the Association of South East

Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a solution.[41] Except for an earlier treaty with Pyongyang, the People's Republic of China (PRC) never made comprehensive security commitments to its allies. The military agreement that Beijing concluded with Hanoi at the latter's request in May 1965 was confined to the deployment of Chinese engineering and anti-aircraft units in a limited area of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) for road construction (an activity China later extended to northern Laos), and thus only partly served functions of control and deterrence.[42] When in 1968 and 1978, the North Vietnamese and Laotian governments respectively asked China to withdraw its troops, Beijing complied, though deliberate acts of vandalism by the departing soldiers indicated strong Chinese dissatisfaction.[43]

Mao's China thus operated more as a fragile hegemonic empire than a territorial one, but it was not averse to more intrusive modes of political control. In addition to the influence exerted by Chinese advisers, Beijing conducted an aggressive propaganda campaign in North Vietnam in 1967–8 (a campaign in which the Chinese embassy also involved the local Chinese community), to demand the replacement of Võ Nguyên Giáp and other 'revisionist' leaders.[44] Such actions only alienated Hanoi. Despite the temporary ascendancy of a few pro-Chinese cadres such as Hoàng Văn Hoan, and the dismissal of some anti-Chinese figures such as Ung Văn Khiêm, China could not maintain effective informal control over the composition of its allied communist leaderships.

The closest approximation to a bloc that the CCP leaders called for was the 'united front of the five revolutionary Asian countries' (China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, the last being represented by Sihanouk's exile government). This concept was first outlined in the wake of Lon Nol's coup in Cambodia, during the visits which Zhou Enlai and the deposed Sihanouk paid to Pyongyang in April and June 1970.[45] While North Korea enthusiastically welcomed the plan, it soon foundered on Hanoi's opposition. Having realized that such a front (which a Vietnamese diplomat sarcastically dubbed 'an Asian Warsaw Pact') would exclude the USSR and implicitly challenge the leadership role that North Vietnam had arrogated to itself in Indochina, the Vietnamese leaders declared that all communist states should join forces against 'American imperialism'.[46]

The issue of Vietnamese versus Chinese hegemony over Indochina greatly influenced the attitude Hanoi adopted towards Moscow in the 1970s and 1980s. During the Cambodian civil war (1970–5), the Soviet leaders, ready as they were to acquiesce in Hanoi's dominance over Laos and Cambodia, actually insisted on sending their aid shipments to the Khmer guerrillas through the DRV, whereas China flatly said no when Hanoi proposed that Chinese aid to Cambodia be sent via North Vietnam. Facing Chinese competition and Soviet acquiescence, the Vietnamese leaders evidently found the Soviet option more advantageous to their interests. However, Hanoi jealously guarded its Laotian and Cambodian fiefdoms against any Soviet interference even at the zenith of the Soviet–Vietnamese alliance (1979–85). Consequently, Gorbachev's efforts to achieve a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia led to a rapid deterioration of Soviet–Vietnamese relations.[47]

The Vietnamese communists' decades-long commitment to 'Indochinese unity', influenced as it was by French colonial administrative traditions, constituted a special

combination of internationalist and nationalist motivations. As a vision of internationalism, it was clearly a limited one, for Hanoi never showed the same determination to support the Thai and other non-Indochinese guerrilla movements as it did to maintain its foothold in Laos and Cambodia.[48] On the other hand, in 1954 and 1973 Vietnam decided to reduce its involvement in Cambodia in order to pursue specific national goals. Paradoxically, both policies elicited complaints from the Cambodian comrades, who alternately accused Hanoi of 'hegemonism' and 'betrayal'.

Vietnam's 'regional internationalism' stood in peculiar contrast to the foreign policy of North Korea after 1971. While Hanoi, overburdened by its own wars, could not conduct any substantial activity on other continents, Pyongyang—unable to achieve unification by a struggle fought on domestic soil—sought to outcompete Seoul in the global diplomatic arena.[49] Anxious to gain external supporters for its cause, North Korea extended its military assistance programmes to Africa, the Middle East, and other regions far beyond the ordinary geopolitical sphere of interest of a small North East Asian power. The essentially nationalist, rather than internationalist, motivation of this policy clearly manifested itself in North Korea's readiness to cooperate with any Third World leader who could be expected to vote in favour of Pyongyang in the Non-Aligned Movement, including such rightist dictators as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and General Gnassingbé Eyadéma of Togo.[50] This approach had much in common with China's post-1970 strategy but differed sharply from Hanoi's Marxist-internationalist preferences for radical regimes, such as Algeria, Guinea, and Congo-Brazzaville.

Conclusion

Reflecting both internationalist and nationalist inspirations, a peculiar feature of communist imperial policies was that the core elites selected the nominally sovereign state as the basic unit of their 'outer empires', rather than simply annexing the occupied countries or creating various semi-sovereign structures. In practice, this principle by no means prevented the imposition of modes of control over peripheral states that were highly intrusive even in comparison with 'classical' and fascist empires, but it still distinguished the communist states from the latter regimes. In particular, it seems to have precluded such techniques of domination as demographic expansion, external repression that was more severe than domestic repression, and the institutionalized privileging of one client state at the expense of another. These distinctive features of communist imperial policies contradict definitions of totalitarianism such as those of Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski that consider communist and fascist regimes to be fundamentally alike and similarly expansionist.[51] At the same time, the considerable differences between Stalin's USSR and Mao's China indicate that there may not have been a generic communist imperial policy, either.

In the policies of the communist states, internationalism and nationalism did not appear as mutually exclusive forces. On the contrary, peripheral communist states often showed

'internationalist' loyalty towards the core state and nationalist hostility towards another peripheral state, whereas the Kremlin simultaneously encouraged nationalism in the Western camp and suppressed it in its own empire. In the light of this 'ideological schizophrenia', many observers doubted if the peripheral communist leaders were motivated by genuine nationalist feelings. Still, the fact that even such outwardly subservient leaderships like the Mongolian one could harbour a strong ethnic and economic nationalism indicates that such emotions were partly channelled but not extinguished by internationalism.

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CHAPTER 18

AVERTING ARMAGEDDON: THE COMMUNIST PEACE MOVEMENT, 1948–1956

GEOFFREY ROBERTS

The self-definition of the Soviet state as a peace-loving country dated to 1917 when the new Bolshevik-led government issued a Decree on Peace calling for an end to the First World War. In the 1920s and 1930s the struggle against war was one of the great propaganda themes of the communist movement and of Soviet foreign policy. But Soviet leaders, including Stalin, remained wedded to the view that war was inevitable while capitalism and imperialism existed. War could be postponed by the struggle for peace but it could not be prevented.[1]

Stalin did not seek war in order to precipitate revolution, as many anti-communist commentators claimed—that was far too risky—but he did see it could lead to radical upheavals. At the end of the Second World War Stalin was convinced there would be another big conflict in twenty to thirty years.[2] By the end of the 1940s, however, that apocalyptic perspective had been all but abandoned and replaced by the idea that the struggle for peace, not the outbreak of war, would be the handmaiden of radical change. Thereafter the USSR increasingly defined itself as a peace-loving rather than a revolutionary state, a self-conception that became deeply embedded in the Soviet and communist political psyche.

This post-war transformation of Soviet identity was framed by the activities and concepts of the communist-led peace movement. Long before the Soviets renounced the doctrine of the inevitability of war the peace movement asserted that war could be abolished, not just averted. In the late 1940s and early 1950s the mass mobilization of the peace movement played a vital role in resisting Cold War polarization and keeping open the possibility of a peaceful resolution of the conflict. After Stalin's death the movement's influence on Western public opinion contributed to the development of

a Soviet–Western détente that climaxed with the Geneva summit of July 1955. Equally important was the peace movement's pioneering role in opening up Soviet society to outside influences and engagements. The massive coverage of the peace movement in the Soviet press provided a window to the outside world, as did the visits to the USSR of increasing numbers of peace activists, visits reciprocated by Soviet delegations abroad. The peace movement also contributed to the emergence of a new Soviet discourse on international politics that talked about 'world society' and 'international public opinion' and stressed the importance of 'trust' in interstate relations. Implicit in this new discourse was the idea of an emergent international civil society—a realm of private citizen initiative and engagement with global issues.

In its heyday the communist peace movement was remarkably influential. It attracted the support of significant sections of the non-communist Left. It rallied hundreds of millions of people in anti-nuclear petition campaigns. Its conferences featured a dazzling array of Western scientists, artists, and intellectuals. It was seen as a dire political and cultural challenge by Western governments, who went to inordinate lengths to sponsor and finance counter-movements to combat the peace movement's influence and to extol the virtues of capitalism and liberal democracy. The importance of the communist peace movement in the history of the Cold War was highlighted by Marshall D. Shulman in *Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised* (1963). Shulman argued that Stalin began to step away from the Cold War in the late 1940s when he launched a series of 'peace offensives', the chief instrument being the communist-led peace movement.[3] Shulman's book was based on the public pronouncements of the Soviet government, and as a result he tended to exaggerate the extent to which the peace movement directly reflected Moscow's will. With the benefit of Russian archives it is possible to discern a more complex story of the relationship between the peace movement and Soviet foreign policy. The peace movement was a pathfinder as well as a follower of Soviet strategy, a lobbyist seeking to influence Moscow's outlook as well as a transmission belt for its policies. The peace movement pursued its own interests, priorities, and perspectives as well as supporting those of the Soviet Union.

The Emergence of the Communist Peace Movement

The initiative for the establishment of a new peace movement came from Polish and French communist intellectuals who in August 1948 **organized** a World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace in Wrocław. While the congress was not a Soviet idea, the Soviet delegation was led by Alexander Fadeev, head of the Soviet Writers' Union, and Ilya Ehrenburg, a prominent writer and journalist.

The congress met in the shadow of the Communist Information Buro, established a year earlier by nine leading European communist parties, including the French and

Italian communists. At the Cominform's founding conference in Poland in September 1947, Stalin's ideology chief, Andrei Zhdanov, famously proclaimed that the post-war world had split into two camps: a camp of reactionary capitalism and militarism that was striving for a new war and a camp of socialism and democracy struggling to maintain peace. In his speech to the Wrocław congress on 'science and culture in the struggle for peace, progress and democracy' Fadeev reiterated Zhdanov's two-camps doctrine and attacked Western capitalist culture and intellectuals. However, he softened his stance by emphasizing that the post-war split was political, not geopolitical, and that countries as well as blocs were split. Fadeev also claimed for the USSR the support of the world's intelligentsia, citing Anatole France, Henri Barbusse, Pablo Neruda, Frédéric Joliot-Curie, George Bernard Shaw, and Roman Rolland.[4]

In reality, the congress was quite diverse with some 500 delegates from forty-six countries. Henry Wallace, Roosevelt's former vice-president and the Progressive Party's candidate in the US presidential election, sent a message of support and the congress was attended by the American writer Howard Fast, the journalist Edward Crankshaw, the French philosopher Julien Benda, the German playwright Bertolt Brecht, the head of UNESCO Julian Huxley, the editor of the *New Statesman* Kingsley Martin, the artist Pablo Picasso, Irene Joliot-Curie (the half-Polish daughter of Nobel laureate Marie Curie), the Irish chemist J. D. Bernal, the British biologist J. B. S. Haldane, and the historian A. J. P. Taylor. Taylor spoke in favour of intellectual freedom on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and in response a Soviet delegate, the literary critic David Zaslavsky, replied: 'We cannot expect to arrive at a unanimous view and I consider it natural that here in this hall are sitting side by side Christians, priests and atheistic Bolsheviks.'[5] The congress passed a manifesto in defence of peace (supported by 426 delegates with 11 against, including Crankshaw, Huxley, and Taylor) and established an International Liaison Committee (ILC) of Intellectuals for Peace with headquarters in Paris and sections in each of the forty-six countries represented at Wrocław. The ILC shared a building in Paris with the Women's International Democratic Federation—another communist front—and in February 1949 the two organizations announced there would be a series of peace conferences in cities across the world, including a world congress in Paris in April that would be open to representatives from political, social, and religious organizations as well as artists, intellectuals, and scientists. The importance the Soviets attached to the congress was signalled by the Politburo's authorization of $70,000–$100,000 to fund its organization.[6]

Before the congress, the leaders of the large Soviet delegation, Fadeev and Ehrenburg,[7] were issued with a party directive setting out Soviet policy for the peace movement which stated that the main aim was to ensure the movement involved as many people as possible, irrespective of national, political, and religious differences.[8] While Fadeev and Ehrenburg received similar instructions before every major meeting of the peace movement, they were authors as well as recipients of these directives—which were drafted by Soviet officials on the basis of their reports and recommendations. Through this mechanism the peace movement influenced as well as echoed Soviet foreign policy.

The World Congress of Partisans of Peace opened in Paris on 20 April 1949. Attended by nearly 2,000 delegates the congress claimed to speak for 600 million people in seventy-two countries. Another 275 delegates, refused visas by the French government, gathered in Prague. The congress was graced or sponsored by even more luminaries than the Wrocław gathering: the African-American activist W. E. B. Du Bois, the actor Charlie Chaplin, the playwrights Arthur Miller and Clifford Odets, the novelist Heinrich Mann, the artists Henri Matisse and Marc Chagall, an ex-president of Mexico, and the Queen Dowager of Belgium. Picasso contributed a drawing of a dove that was to become the movement's famous emblem and a universal symbol of peace.

Especially important to the political image of the congress was the presence of leading non-communist socialist politicians such as Pietro Nenni, head of the Italian Socialist Party, who had served as a political commissar in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. He gave a speech that implicitly contradicted the two-camps doctrine: 'Our Congress does not place before the nations of the world the dilemma of choosing between the Soviet Union and the United States of America.…To have to make this choice would mean that we are already at war and that we already consider the struggle for peace lost.' However, the congress was well choreographed and there were no radically dissenting voices as at Wrocław.

The congress was opened by Joliot-Curie, who urged scientists to accept their responsibility to prevent the use of atomic energy for the purposes of destruction. The resolution that was passed condemned NATO, opposed the rearmament of Germany and Japan, and called for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. More important than this predictable political outcome—which was wholly in line with Soviet foreign policy—was the tone and sentiment of the congress: militant hostility to war on the one hand, and dedication to peace on the other. Elected at the congress was a hundred-strong Permanent Committee of the Partisans of Peace (PCPP) with representatives from fifty different countries and international organizations.[9] Organizations supporting the PCPP were established in countries throughout the world, including the USSR. In August 1949 the Soviets convened an All-Soviet Congress of Supporters of Peace and elected a Soviet Peace Committee (SPC) headed by the writer Nikolai Tikhonov, with Ehrenburg as his deputy. More than 1,000 delegates attended the congress and there were speeches from a number of foreign guests, including Bernal, Nenni, and Jean Laffitte, general secretary of the PCPP.[10]

Through activities organized by the SPC in the 1950s, the struggle for peace became a major theme of the USSR's domestic as well as its foreign politics. As Timothy Johnston has noted, 'the popular response to the Struggle for Peace was neither half-hearted nor disinterested. Soviet citizens rallied passionately and often emotionally around the slogan of peace.'[11] Popular enthusiasm for peace at home reinforced the Soviet elite's self-belief in its own peaceful intentions and the success of the peace movement abroad gave it confidence that the struggle for peace could succeed. The SPC was also highly active in the international peace movement and effective in winning the Soviet leadership's funding for delegations to and from abroad. There were hundreds of these delegations, involving thousands of people, the number rising exponentially after Stalin's death; but even at the peak of Stalinist xenophobia in the late 1940s and early 1950s the peace movement chipped away at Soviet isolationism.

The Cominform and the Peace Movement

Despite repeated claims that the peace movement was politically independent of Moscow, the PCPP soon found itself dragged into Stalin's dispute with the Yugoslav communist leader Josip Broz Tito. At its Rome meeting in October 1949, the PCPP condemned the Tito government as inimical to peace and voted to break relations with the Yugoslav peace committee.[12] Within the Cominform the primacy of the peace movement was expounded by Mikhail Suslov, Zhdanov's successor as Soviet ideology chief, in his keynote speech to its third and last conference in November 1949.[13] Yet the peace movement was far from being dominated by the Cominform. On the contrary, the rise of the movement contributed to the eclipse of the latter as the focus of Moscow's political strategy. Under the influence of the peace movement the Cominform renounced the doctrine of the inevitability of war. At a meeting of its Secretariat in April 1950, Suslov criticized fatalistic talk of the inevitability of war and, citing Lenin, spoke of peaceful competition between capitalism and socialism.[14] In May 1950 an editorial in *For a Lasting Peace* was even more forthright in the condemnation of such fatalism:

> One of the main propaganda theses of the Anglo-American imperialists is that of the inevitability of war. This thesis is the basis for the war hysteria which they are fomenting… We must be firm in the knowledge that war is not inevitable… it depends on the partisans of peace whether there is war or not.[15]

In October 1952, on the eve of the Nineteenth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, Stalin took up the issue of the inevitability of war. In a *Pravda* article the dictator reaffirmed the doctrine that inter-capitalist (but not socialist-capitalist) wars were inevitable under capitalism, but he did so in such a way as to render the concept meaningless: 'The object of the present-day peace movement is to rouse the masses of people to fight for the preservation of peace and for the prevention of another world war. Consequently, the aim of this movement is not to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism—it confines itself to the democratic aim of preserving peace.'[16]

The Petition Campaigns

During the first phase of its history the activities of the peace movement revolved around two great petition campaigns. The first and best-known was launched at a meeting of the PCPP in Stockholm in March 1950. The Stockholm Appeal was a petition calling for

the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Across the world thousands of local peace committees were established to collect signatures. By the end of the year nearly 500 million people—a quarter of the world's population—had signed the appeal. A good many of the signatures were collected within the communist bloc—more than 200 million in China and 100 million in the Soviet Union—but tens of millions of people in the capitalist world signed too: 17 million in Italy, 15 million in France, 6 million in Japan, 5 million in Argentina and Brazil, 3 million in the United States, 2 million in West Germany, 1.5 million in Britain, 1 million each in Austria, Australasia, Finland, and India.[17]

The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 added impetus to the Stockholm Appeal campaign. The PCPP responded by convening a second World Peace Congress in November 1950. Scheduled to take place in Sheffield in the UK, it was hastily transferred to Warsaw when the British government refused a number of delegates entry into the country. Even so, more than 2,000 delegates from eighty-one countries attended the congress. Resolutions were passed calling for peace in Korea, for a UN-sponsored meeting of Britain, China, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States to settle their differences, and for a programme of disarmament that would result in up to 50 per cent cuts in the armed forces of the great powers. The congress also replaced the PCPP with a World Peace Council (WPC) that had a membership of 220 and representatives from fifty-eight countries. The Buro of the WPC was bigger than its PCPP predecessor and included Fadeev and Ehrenburg among its members.[18]

The first meeting of the WPC was held in Berlin in February 1951. At that meeting the council decided on a new petition campaign: the call for a peace pact between the five great powers. Such a pact had been a Soviet aim since September 1949 and had featured in the resolutions of the peace movement, but not as a central demand. In February 1951, however, Stalin gave an interview in which he highlighted the demand for a great-power peace pact.[19] The Politburo's instructions to Fadeev and Ehrenburg reflected the new priority attached to this demand. During the next two years 600 million signatures were collected—100 million more than the Stockholm Appeal—but it was hard going. In May 1951 Ehrenburg reported to Molotov that the campaign had been slow to develop in the capitalist countries. Many more such reports followed.[20] Even the Soviets found it difficult to mobilize domestically around the issue and had to give detailed campaign instructions to all regional party organizations.[21] Of the 600 million signatures collected, nearly 500 million were from China and the USSR.

One problem was that the peace pact petition lacked the emotional simplicity of the Stockholm Appeal. As Nenni noted, 'to gain 500 million signatures to the Stockholm Appeal it was enough to appeal to the emotions'.[22] The peace pact campaign, by contrast, was more partisan: the text of the petition stated that if any of the five great powers refused to negotiate a peace pact it would be taken as evidence of aggressive intent. As Bernal pointed out, three of the five powers (Britain, France, and the United States) had already rejected the idea of a peace pact and the same three powers did not even recognize Communist China. The challenge, he argued, was to convince Western public opinion that a great-power peace pact was a realistic prospect as well as of intrinsic merit.[23]

Because it was tied to such a specifically Soviet policy, the peace pact petition campaign enhanced the WPC's identification with Moscow. But counter to this ran another trend in the WPC, namely, its commitment to broaden the identity of the movement by developing relations with other peace movements. At its meeting in February 1951, the committee resolved to continue discussions with mondialists in different countries (i.e. with the advocates of a world society and a world state); to discuss joint action with the Quakers; to inform the Christian Churches about the decisions of the Warsaw congress; to develop relations with advocates of neutrality in the Cold War; to convene a number of regional and specialist conferences; and to approach 'peace-loving scientists' with a view to encouraging them and their scientific associations to adopt the principle that their discoveries should only be used for peaceful purposes.[24]

There was much common ground between the WPC and non-communist peace movements and there was some progress in opening up lines of communication. But the WPC's partisanship, its identification with the Soviet Union, and the dominating role of communists were all barriers to close collaboration. To help overcome its isolation, the WPC decided to convene a Congress of the Peoples for Peace in Vienna in December 1952 that would 'unite all who wished the spirit of negotiation to prevail over decisions imposed by force'.[25] It prepared carefully for the congress, trying to ensure that delegations from various countries were as diverse as possible.[26] However as Ehrenburg warned Vyacheslav Molotov, the head of the Politburo's foreign policy commission, in October 1952, the more diverse the congress the less the WPC would be able to control its agenda and discussions.[27]

From Vienna Congress to the Helsinki Assembly

The Congress of the Peoples for Peace convened in Vienna from 12 to 19 December 1952. It was similar in size to its predecessors in Paris and Warsaw (1857 representatives from eighty-five countries) but its composition was more diverse and its discussions more open. A number of Churches and religions were represented, as were the trade unions, women, and youth groups. There was greater representation of socialist and labour parties than at previous congresses. Particularly important was the participation of the Italian liberal parliamentarian Giuseppe Nitti, who was chair of the Italian parliament's peace group. Reflecting the diversity of the congress, the newly elected WPC was twice the size of its predecessor.

Ehrenburg's fears about the congress proved to be misplaced. There were no embarrassing discussions or incidents, and in his speech Nitti paid tribute to the openness of the congress's deliberations. The resolution passed by the congress overwhelmingly was a less strident version of existing WPC policies: negotiations for a five-power peace pact; an end to the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Lao, Cambodia, and Malaya; peace treaties

with Germany, Japan, and Austria that precluded militarism; disarmament negotiations and a ban on atomic, biological, and chemical weapons; and admission of China to the United Nations. The new theme was the general conditions necessary to ease international tensions. Bernal headed this debate and argued that both formal agreements and general goodwill were necessary to create conditions conducive to the reduction of international tensions.[28] The Soviet view that the Vienna congress should be a platform for the continuation of the peace pact campaign was reflected in draft directives to Fadeev and Ehrenburg in early 1953.[29] However, the sudden death of Stalin on 5 March 1953 precipitated a shift in Soviet policy towards the peace movement. At Stalin's funeral Georgy Malenkov, the new Soviet prime minister, emphasized the USSR's commitment to peaceful coexistence. A few days later, at a session of the Supreme Soviet, he stated: 'There is no disputed or unresolved problem that cannot be resolved on the basis of mutual agreement between interested parties.'[30] This sentiment was not new but it raised expectations that there could be a respite in the Cold War and that Soviet–Western negotiations about the post-war peace settlement, especially in relation to Germany, would be resumed.

From 13 to 15 March 1953 the WPC Buro convened in Prague to discuss the follow-up to the Vienna congress. The latter had established a broad-based commission, scheduled to meet in Vienna on 16–17 March, to issue a direct appeal to each of the five great powers to negotiate a peace pact. But during the Buro's discussions, as Fadeev subsequently reported to Molotov, doubts were expressed by some members, including Nenni, about the viability of continuing the peace pact campaign.[31] When the commission met, however, it duly issued an appeal to each of the great powers to begin discussions about a peace pact. At the same time, it called more generally for negotiations to resolve international disputes. The need for a broad campaign was raised by Nenni and supported by Ehrenburg, who referred to Malenkov's remarks to the Supreme Soviet.[32] On 5–6 May the WPC Buro met again, this time in Stockholm, to discuss perspectives for the forthcoming plenary meeting of the WPC in Budapest in June. Ehrenburg made another important intervention when he pointed out that since the peace pact campaign had been launched, the international atmosphere had improved and a general campaign for negotiations now had a real chance of success. The conclusion of a peace pact, he suggested, was not the immediate objective but would be the culmination of a campaign for negotiations. In effect, this signalled the end of the campaign for a five-power peace pact. In his report to Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin's successor as Soviet party leader, Ehrenburg presented his intervention as being in accordance with his instructions, but reading the meeting's transcript it is clear that he was responding to demands from other members of the Buro for a broader campaign.[33]

When the WPC convened in Budapest from 15 to 20 June it was as an enlarged forum attended by the representatives of a number of religious, pacifist, and non-communist political organizations. The main decision of the meeting was to launch a world campaign for negotiations aimed at lessening international tensions and paving the way for the peaceful resolution of disputes between states.[34] The political breadth of the Budapest session of the WPC was emphasized in Ehrenburg's report to Molotov

(reinstated as Soviet foreign minister after Stalin's death).[35] The campaign for negotiations, he explained, would take different forms in different countries, depending on local issues. In the case of France, for example, a key demand would be an agreement to end the war in Vietnam.[36] Ehrenburg's report was followed by proposals from Suslov in August that called for a sustained campaign within the USSR in favour of the negotiated resolution of international problems. What the WPC had in mind, he emphasized, was a prolonged campaign that would eventually result in concrete international agreements. The idea was not to secure abstract declarations in favour of negotiations but to wage specific campaigns in different countries for the negotiation of particular problems.[37] The internal adoption by the Soviets of the WPC's campaign for negotiations and the reduction of international tension was an interesting example of blowback from the peace movement. Subsequently, this became a major theme of Soviet foreign policy, too, with the added ingredient of the call for the restoration of trust in international relations as the basis for the resumption of negotiations and the reduction of tensions.

Initially the campaign for negotiations was quite successful, with many thousands of meetings held all over the world.[38] To further the campaign the WPC decided to organize a conference on the reduction of international tensions. That conference took place in Stockholm in June 1954. Despite being attended by several hundred delegates, it was not seen as being as successful as previous congresses of the peace movement. Only thirty or so countries were represented and many national peace committees failed to mobilize for it. The problem, as internal Soviet documents noted, was that the campaign for negotiations had failed to take off in a number of countries. Furthermore, while there were numerous campaigns demanding negotiations to resolve this or that issue, without a unifying central campaign demand such as the prohibition of nuclear weapons or a five-power pact the peace movement had fragmented.[39]

Following the Bikini hydrogen bomb tests of March 1954—whose explosive power and radioactive fallout aroused considerable international concern—the WPC began to foreground nuclear issues once again. In January 1955 it launched another petition on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, a campaign that was welcomed with enthusiasm in the USSR. By the end of April the SPC had collected nearly 120 million signatures.[40] The WPC's attention, however, was focused on the organization of a World Assembly for Peace, intended as a rerun of the Vienna Congress of the Peoples for Peace but with even broader political representation. This World Assembly for Peace took place in Helsinki from 22 to 30 June 1955. Attended by 1841 delegates, observers, and guests from sixty-eight countries, it was more diverse than the Vienna congress. Present were representatives of social, political, religious, cultural, and business organizations who in the past would have refused to have anything to do with the WPC. A Soviet analysis of the delegates revealed that the Helsinki congress was broadly similar to the Vienna congress in terms of numbers of delegates, countries represented, gender balance (75 per cent male), and occupational profile (mostly middle class). But in two respects there were striking differences: at Helsinki many more parliamentarians were present (146 compared to 46 in Vienna) and significantly more representatives from organizations with no previous connection to the peace movement (269 compared to 46). Among the

446-strong WPC elected at the Helsinki assembly, apart from delegates from the communist bloc, 84 members were communists, 79 were communist sympathizers and progressives (i.e. fellow travellers), 23 were socialists or socialist sympathizers, and no less than 98 were representatives of 'bourgeois political parties'.[41]

As well as plenary sessions, there were seven panel discussions: disarmament and atomic weapons; security; national independence; economic and social problems; cultural exchange; youth; and 'the activities of peace-loving powers'.

At the end of the assembly two statements were issued: a greeting to the United Nations on the tenth anniversary of its foundation that urged the organization to remain true to its principles; and the 'Helsinki Appeal' that called for differences to be overcome by discussion and negotiation.[42] Another decision was to support a Japanese proposal for a day of action on 6 August 1955—the tenth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. On the anniversary the WPC organized a petition calling for the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction. In a single day the petition secured a staggering 665,963,811 signatures, including one-third of Japan's population.[43]

In his report to the Soviet leadership on Helsinki Ehrenburg stressed the greater political diversity of the assembly compared to previous congresses and the more critical discussion of the policies of the WPC and of the USSR. He insisted, however, that Helsinki was 'evidence of the great turn among broad sections of international public opinion in favour of negotiations and the reduction of international tensions'.[44]

In a speech read to the assembly on his behalf, Bertrand Russell, the British philosopher and peace campaigner, criticized the movement for demanding the prohibition of nuclear weapons, arguing that such declarations could not guarantee the non-use or non-development of nuclear weapons. As a first step to nuclear disarmament he proposed that there should be explicit recognition by states of the devastating power of atomic bombs. Russell's intervention annoyed some delegates but Frédéric Joliot-Curie welcomed it as constructive. That Russell, an anti-communist who in the 1940s had advocated threatening the Soviet Union with preventative war if it did not agree to international control of nuclear energy, was prepared to engage with the WPC showed how far the movement had travelled politically since the Wrocław congress. Indeed, in early 1955 Russell was involved in negotiations with Joliot-Curie about sponsoring a statement from a group of prominent scientists warning of the dangers of nuclear weapons. These negotiations led to the Russell–Einstein manifesto of July 1955 that called for a conference of scientists 'to appraise the perils that have arisen as a result of the development of weapons of mass destruction'. It was the Russell–Einstein manifesto that led to the first Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs in July 1957, a gathering of Western and Soviet scientists devoted to international scientific collaboration in the interests of peace.[45]

The communist peace movement is famous for its involvement of prominent writers and artists but equally important were its efforts to mobilize scientists. The WPC was headed by a scientist—Joliot-Curie—and another scientist, J. D. Bernal, was one of its leading international campaigners. Scientists were targeted to sign the Stockholm Appeal and many did, including some who had worked on the Manhattan Project. One

scientist who refused to sign was Niels Bohr on the grounds that the petition did not demand a free exchange of ideas within and between countries. To this objection, the WPC replied that such an exchange was impossible under the shadow of the atomic bomb.[46]

The Peace Movement and Soviet Foreign Policy

While the success of the WPC in broadening its political basis was the result of sustained efforts, equally important were changes in Soviet foreign policy that transformed what had been the movement's biggest political handicap—its close relationship with the USSR—into its greatest political asset. By the end of 1953 the Soviet peace offensive launched after Stalin's death had developed into a radical campaign to end the Cold War through the achievement of a comprehensive European security settlement. At the centrepiece of Soviet policy was a proposal to establish a pan-European collective security system to span the Cold War divide. This proposal was coupled with an offer by Moscow to reunite Germany as long as it remained demilitarized and neutral.[47] Moscow initiated the campaign for European collective security in February 1954 at the Berlin conference of the foreign ministers of Britain, France, the United States, and the USSR, convened to resume the negotiations about the post-war peace settlement that had ground to a halt in the late 1940s. The Western states rejected Soviet proposals, but the Soviets, heartened by the positive public response to the collective security idea, continued with their campaign. Moscow failed to achieve its goal but the campaign was quite successful politically and diplomatically and Soviet proposals for European collective security dominated the agenda of the Geneva summit in July 1955. By the time a second conference of foreign ministers convened in November 1955, the Western powers had been forced by public and political opinion to put forward their own proposals on European collective security.

The Soviet diplomatic campaign for European collective security was buttressed by the political campaigning of the WPC and its national sections. Particularly important were the campaigns in France against the establishment of a European Defence Community and the associated campaign in Britain against German rearmament. In West Germany the activities of the communist peace movement linked up with social democratic opposition to rearmament and with the development of a movement in favour of a neutral Germany. The combined Soviet–WPC campaign was remarkably successful in persuading Western public opinion of the merits of pan-European collective security. An analysis of public opinion polling data prepared for the Eisenhower administration soon after the Geneva summit, concluded that the results 'raise disquieting doubts about the future of NATO'. One question asked: 'Suppose it were proposed that NATO be replaced by a security system including both the U.S. and the USSR

and other European nations. Would you favour this proposal, or do you prefer present arrangements for West European defence?' In response 38 per cent of those polled in Britain, France, Italy, and West Germany said they would favour a new system while only 19 per cent favoured retaining NATO, with 43 per cent having no opinion. Numbers favouring mutual troop withdrawals by the United States and the Soviet Union from Europe were even higher. Among 'upper socio-economic groups' the percentages favouring pan-European security and troop withdrawals were higher still. Other data indicated a strong growth of neutralist attitudes in Western Europe—the view that neither side in the Cold War should be favoured—and of more positive attitudes towards the Soviet Union. There was also overwhelming support for banning nuclear weapons.[48]

It is important to note, too, the impact of Soviet proposals for nuclear disarmament. In May 1955 Moscow proposed that the UN should establish an international control agency to supervise dramatic reductions in armaments and armed forces and initiate a process leading to the prohibition of nuclear weapons. These proposals were widely seen as an important breakthrough in the logjam of UN-sponsored nuclear disarmament negotiations over whether an effective international control regime should precede prohibition (the US position) or follow an agreement in principle on prohibition (the Soviet position). The new Soviet proposals enhanced both the credibility of the USSR as a self-proclaimed peace-loving power and the WPC's long-standing campaign for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, which now seemed a realistic prospect.

The post-Stalin revolution in Soviet foreign policy was highly beneficial to the communist peace movement but it had some paradoxical implications. While the struggle for peace continued to define Soviet foreign strategy, this goal was now pursued via a series of diplomatic initiatives, and the peace movement was no longer the centrepiece of Moscow's foreign policy. At the same time Moscow continued to see the peace movement's influence on public opinion in the West as a critical factor in its favour. Another paradox was that the more the Soviets assimilated the language and concepts of the peace movement—talking increasingly of 'world society' as well as of world capitalism, of 'international public opinion' as well as of international class struggle—the more they internalized the new discourse and represented it as their own invention.[49]

1956: Year of Crisis for the Peace Movement

For all its great success the Helsinki assembly was overshadowed by the Geneva summit of Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States in July 1955—the first such gathering of top leaders since 1945. The summit was surrounded by much talk of 'the spirit of Geneva'—the idea that there was a new atmosphere in world politics that would facilitate the speedy resolution of international problems and the establishment of a permanent détente. However, the only decision taken was to hold a foreign ministers'

conference in Geneva at which the first item on the agenda would be 'European security and the German question'. At the Geneva foreign ministers' conference in November 1955 the Western powers put forward their own proposals on European security. They offered the Soviets a European security pact under which the signatories would renounce the use of force, limit the size of their armed forces, and pledge collective defence against aggression, irrespective of whether the attackers or the victims were NATO members. The Western proposal was remarkably similar to the Soviets' own draft collective security treaty. But the West wanted something in return for a European Security Pact: all-German elections leading to a united Germany that would be free to join NATO. Molotov was willing to contemplate this proposal as a basis for negotiation but he was overruled by Khrushchev (by now the dominant figure in the Soviet leadership) and the conference closed without agreement.

In diplomatic terms the spirit of Geneva dissipated quite quickly after the failure of the foreign ministers' conference. In terms of public perception, however, the Soviet–Western détente held for another year until, that is, the Suez and Hungarian crises of 1956. This is reflected in lingering public support for pan-European collective security. In December 1955 an American survey of opinion in Britain, France, Italy, and West Germany found the public divided between a third who favoured NATO and a third who preferred an alternative security arrangement in Europe, with the rest either don't-knows or supporters of outright neutrality.[50] In January 1956 a foreign ministry briefing for the Soviet leadership on political and public opinion in the West arrived at much the same conclusion, noting that despite the official positions of Western governments there was still considerable support for pan-European collective security and for the idea of a neutral Germany.[51]

The problem with the spirit of Geneva from the peace movement's point of view was that the more relaxed the international atmosphere the more it detracted from the urgency of its campaigning. After the Helsinki assembly there was a slump in active support for the peace movement. As an October 1956 Soviet report on the WPC noted: 'The reduction of the activities of the supporters of peace in a number of West European countries in conditions of a lessening of international tensions has led to a weakening of links between the Secretariat of the WPC and many of the national movements in European countries. The situation is even worse in Asia, Africa, and parts of Latin America.'[52]

The WPC responded by returning to the nuclear issue as the centre of its campaigning and in December 1955 decided to convene a European disarmament conference. This event was scheduled to take place in Moscow in March 1956 but was postponed by the Soviets because they feared it might complicate UN disarmament negotiations. The postponement caused dismay among many leaders of the national sections of the peace movement.[53] There was also disquiet when news began to leak out about Khrushchev's secret speech attacking Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress. Stalin had been an icon of the peace movement and many of its leaders—Joliot-Curie, Nenni, Bernal, Cot—had been recipients of Stalin Peace Prizes, established in 1950 as an alternative to the Nobel Peace Prize.[54] The peace movement leader most shocked and disillusioned by Khrushchev's revelations was Fadeev, who committed suicide in May 1956.

In April 1956 Joliot-Curie organized an enlarged session of the WPC in Stockholm. Nearly 500 people were invited to take part in a series of open-ended discussions about disarmament. Many of the invitees had little or no previous connection to the peace movement. The session went well but at the WPC Buro meeting in June there were rumblings of dissent about the character, leadership, and direction of the peace movement. Ricardo Lombard, an Italian delegate, pointed to the difficulties in WPC relations with other peace movements because of its support for the Soviet Union. Such support was understandable at the height of the Cold War but conditions had changed and there was a need to be able to work with a broad range of peace campaigners. J. D. Bernal argued that to be independent the movement had to act as an independent force 'in relation to the East and as well as the West'. Most forthright was Pierre Cot, editor of the WPC's journal and a socialist member of the French National Assembly, who argued for radical changes in leadership, structures, and modus operandi:

> However tolerant the movement and however correct its postulates, the fact that its president, its general secretary, most of its secretariat and national leaders are communists leads one to suppose that the movement is not independent of the Communist Party. Equally, if 95 per cent of the postulates supported by the movement echoed those of Soviet diplomacy, the movement cannot appear to be independent of that diplomacy, whatever differentiation there may be about the remaining 5 per cent. In future the movement must appear clearly to be independent, it must alter its methods, its language, its leading officers, and even its executive staff.[55]

When the Suez crisis broke at the end of October 1956 the WPC leadership responded by organizing a special Buro meeting in Helsinki from 18 to 20 November. By the time the Buro met, Soviet troops had carried out a bloody operation to crush a popular uprising against communist rule in Hungary. The Hungarian events split the communist movement and many thousands left the party in Britain, France, Italy, and elsewhere. In Helsinki the WPC discussions were equally sharp and the divisions just as deep. A compromise resolution was agreed that blamed the Cold War for what had happened in Budapest but the opposition of many socialists and progressives to the Soviet invasion of Hungary led to their departure from the WPC, the most grievous loss being Nenni, who led the Italian Socialist Party out of the peace movement and ended its alignment with the USSR.

In an analysis of the Helsinki meeting for the Soviet leadership Ehrenburg related the crisis to the WPC's recent assertion of its independence. Until 1955, he wrote, WPC leaders had been content to accept Soviet leadership of the peace movement but they had adopted a more questioning attitude in recent times. Ehrenburg pointed to the tension between Moscow's demand for a broad and influential peace movement and the expectation that it would serve as an instrument of Soviet foreign policy. If the Soviet leadership wanted a broad and popular peace movement, he argued, there was a price to be paid in relation to the degree of political control it could expect to exercise over the WPC.[56] The Soviet leadership agreed with Ehrenburg on the need to maintain the WPC's independence and in January 1957 they resolved that the peace movement should not be treated as a channel for Soviet diplomacy.[57]

Conclusion

Moscow's brutal actions in Hungary precipitated a split in the peace movement from which it never recovered. In the years that followed there were many more WPC-led campaigns, petitions, and congresses but the movement never again attained the level of popularity and public influence it experienced in its heyday. Increasingly, the WPC was overshadowed by non-communist peace campaigners, who were free to adopt a political stance that was genuinely independent of both the Cold War blocs. The WPC had, however, created a template for the mass peace movements that followed it, especially the nuclear disarmament campaigns of the 1960s–80s. Among the older generation of these new peace campaigners were many who had cut their political teeth in the great petition campaigns of the 1950s. Most important was the peace movement's enduring impact on the nature and identity of Soviet foreign policy. The self-definition of the Soviet state as peace-loving was a response to the Cold War, and to the growing nuclear danger, but it was also framed by the activities and concepts of the communist-led peace movement. The Soviet Union could have responded to the Cold War much more aggressively and militantly than it did. The peace movement in encouraging the Soviets to step away from the Cold War, to stick to peaceful coexistence, and to seek détente with the West was instrumental in helping to avert the nuclear Armageddon it so feared.

Notes

1. See Silvio Pons, *Stalin and the Inevitable War, 1936–1941* (London: Frank Cass, 2002). An earlier version of this article was presented to the conference on Writing Pugwash Histories, Vienna, May 2012. I am greatly indebted to Professor Nataliya Egorova for her input.
2. See Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), chs. 8–9.
3. Marshall D. Shulman, *Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).
4. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GARF), F.9539, Op.1, D.1 Ll.5–26.
5. GARF, F.9539, Op.1, D.1 Ll.27–36.
6. Nataliya Egorova, 'Soviet Foreign Policy and the Cominform, 1947–1953', in F. Gori and S. Pons (eds.), *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943–1953* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 200.
7. Ilya Ehrenburg, *Postwar Years, 1945–1954* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1966).
8. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (hereafter RGASPI), F.82, Op.2, D.1399, Ll.5–6.
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CHAPTER 19

THE CULT OF PERSONALITY AND SYMBOLIC POLITICS

DANIEL LEESE

On 17 December, Juche 100 (2011) at around 8.30 a.m., Kim Jong Il, the 'Dear Leader' of the North Korean People's Republic, suddenly passed away 'from a great mental and physical strain'[1] during a train ride outside Pyongyang. The previous week, he had still given 'on-the-spot advice' to workers at the Kwangbok Area Supermarket and the Hana Music Information Centre, which he had promised to endow with his systematically acquired music collection. The tireless efforts of providing the populace with his loving care, his constant fight against the evil powers of imperialism hindering Korean reunification, as well as the utter disregard for his personal well-being, the state media claimed, had finally taken its toll. As Kim's body lay in state in the Kumsusan Memorial Palace, which already housed the mummified remains of his father Kim Il Sung, countless delegations and individuals visited the bier to express their utmost grief through dramatic rituals of mourning. Images of the wailing crowds lining the streets during the 40-kilometre funeral procession on 28 December caught international media attention, not least because some had retroactively been edited to depict an idealized setting. Meanwhile the North Korean media reprinted dozens of foreign condolence letters to emphasize Kim's outstanding international reputation. Even nature was said to mourn the deceased, as strange meteorological phenomena were reported from all over the country.[2]

Besides the outpouring of grief and loss, Korean state media featured numerous statements of leading party and army functionaries, who vowed their loyalty to the cause of the Korean revolution under the leadership of Kim's third son, Kim Jong Un. His ascent to power had been speculated about ever since traces of a nascent personality cult had appeared the previous year. He had been promoted to the rank of army general in 2010 and had occasionally assisted his father in giving on-the-spot guidance. The quasi-dynastic succession within the Kim family was presented matter-of-factly and described the 'Dear and Respected Leader' Kim Jong Un as being identical with his father in terms of ideology, leadership, personality, and courage. He played a leading

role in the funeral organization and quickly assumed key positions within party, military, and the state apparatus.

The first months of Kim Jong Un's tenure were characterized by demonstrating unity within leadership circles and shoring up domestic support. He secured the loyalty of the army as the regime's mainstay of power and simultaneously stepped up the personality cult of the Kim family to new heights. During dozens of commemorative events, the populace was mobilized in ever-new celebrations in praise of the wise leadership. The seventieth birthday anniversary of Kim Jong Il on 16 February 2012, officially termed 'Day of the Shining Star', witnessed the unveiling of the first bronze statue of the deceased leader, depicted on horseback, riding alongside his father, 'Great Leader' Kim Il Sung. The latter's centennial birthday anniversary on 15 April, the 'Day of the Sun', was celebrated with even more fanfare. On 13 April, 300,000 people greeted the unveiling of yet another two large-scale statues of the former leaders on Mansu Hill. The 20-metre-high Kim Il Sung statue, originally built in 1972, no longer showed Kim as a stern, Maoist-style revolutionary, but as a friendly, approachable parent figure with rimmed glasses, dressed in business suit and tie, alongside his equally benevolent-looking son. The unveiling of the statues was part of a larger set of rituals of power surrounding the highest North Korean public holiday. Earlier that day, a rocket launch had spectacularly failed before the eyes of Western media representatives, who had been invited to cover the state's military capabilities. Ritualized assemblies in honour of the two Kims were held to demonstrate public allegiance, and on 15 April 2012, a massive military parade took place on Kim Il Sung Square, to commemorate past national hardship and present martial prowess.

The ritual quality of the public demonstrations of military power and national pride was mirrored in the realm of language through a Manichaean rhetoric of good and evil, which depicted the deeds of the Kim dynasty in the most glowing terms as being coterminous with national Korean revival. When South Korean president Lee Myung-bak criticized the military build-up and lavish rituals, and further called upon Kim Jong Un to allow for de-collectivization and agricultural reform to raise the people's living standard, the North Korean media vilified Lee as a heinous traitor and relied on dehumanizing metaphors: 'The army and people of the DPRK will make rat-like Lee and his group meet the most miserable and disgraceful end for doing such mischief in rat holes as defaming the sun [sic!].'[3] By equating criticism of the personality cult and the dictatorial system with attacks against the dignity of the nation, the North Korean leadership appealed to the lowest instincts of in-group/out-group mobilization. Foreign observers meanwhile speculated whether the dictator would order the test of a nuclear device in order to regain international and domestic prestige after the failed rocket launch, or whether these martial rituals were the mandatory acts of a young and inexperienced ruler in need of strengthening his position within the apparatus before embarking on a reform agenda.

The Kim dynasty cult seems like a strange and dangerous relic of the Cold War era. Like a living fossil, it allows us to observe aspects of personality cults, such as the propagation of political myths, loyalty pledges, and the clustering of public space with leader images, which in other cases can only be approached historically. Among the five

self-declared socialist countries in 2012, North Korea is the last to sponsor a full-blown personality cult. In Cuba and the People's Republic of China individual leader cults have clearly been subordinated to the cult of the party, while in Laos and Vietnam posthumous cults are sustained around the former leaders Kaysone Phomvihane and Hồ Chí Minh.[4] Still, these remnants attest to the potency of a form of governance, which during the high tide of the Cold War was commonly seen as a defining feature of communist party rule, the 'cult of personality'.

This article sets out to offer a preliminary overview about theoretical conceptions, historical practices, and current research agendas regarding socialist leader cults. It aims at highlighting the transnational character of the 'cult of personality' as a historical phenomenon that affected all communist party states, though to differing degrees. While highlighting functional aspects of the cult as a means of sociopolitical integration and inner-party competition, the article does not subscribe to conceptions of leader cults as a dictatorial device without popular appeal. Rather it aims at showing that the emotional potency of cults, and their occasionally transcendental effects, varied greatly depending on local circumstances.

The article begins with a discussion of the analytical term 'modern personality cult', as opposed to its everyday usage describing any type of political (self)-aggrandizement. It then provides a brief comparative genealogy of major socialist leader cults to show similarities and differences over time, before focusing on three major subfields of research that feature prominently in recent scholarship on socialist leader cults: scientific approaches, rituals of power, and finally material culture. These research agendas hint at a number of thorny issues confronting scholarship on socialist leader cults, not least the questions of state–society interaction and cult adaptation/reception that are in need of further exploration.

Modern Personality Cults

The veneration of political or religious leaders is unique neither to communist parties nor to the modern era. There are countless examples of monarchs and emperors cultivating excessive rituals of worship and subordination. Especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, state leaders increasingly came to rely on the newly emerging mass media to project favourable images of their rule in the public sphere and thus tried to create emotional bonds with the populace. Despite certain analogies, these attempts to 'construct charisma'[5] vary in several important aspects from modern personality cults. Jan Plamper distinguishes five characteristics which set the modern leader cults apart from their traditional forerunners. First, they are secular cults and no longer draw on transcendental sources of legitimacy, such as *Gottesgnadentum* or the Mandate of Heaven, but are deeply imbued with the notion of popular sovereignty. Second, they are 'children of mass politics'[6] and target the entire population, not certain elites only. Accordingly, they display a symbolism and language that is potentially legible

for everybody through the advent of modern society with its institutions of mass education and conscription. Third, cults are disseminated by means of mass media, relying on a national network of news, radio, and film distribution that allows for a permeation of public space with mass-manufactured cult symbols and standardized rhetoric in previously unthinkable ways. Fourth, the unrivalled distribution of the cult message necessitates a 'directed public sphere',[7] precluding public criticism or alternatives. A true leader cult therefore emerges in closed societies only. Finally, the modern personality cult, at least so far, is an 'exclusively patricentric phenomenon',[8] as opposed to some traditional cults, mirroring unequal power distribution between the two sexes within society.

While similar media strategies of elevating an individual above others by means of spin-doctoring or outright media manipulation may be observed within every political system, even democratic settings, they do not assume the rigidity and totalizing power of their dictatorial counterparts. There is always the possibility of airing different views or of opting for a different candidate within a certain period of time. Still many disquieting similarities between campaigning strategies and modern personality cults remain. The current example of Vladimir Putin in Russia, re-elected as president for the third time after enforcing a change of the constitution, reveals the difficulties of drawing hard boundaries between nascent personality cults and their full-blown counterparts.

Among the most important examples of modern personality cults are several early-twentieth-century state founders or military heroes, who combined nationalism, popular sovereignty, and occasionally syncretistic doctrines to replace traditional creeds. Noteworthy instances of these 'state father' cults are the institutionalized worship of Mustafa Kemal 'Atatürk', founder of the Republic of Turkey, who came to amalgamate nationalism with scientism into a synthesis entitled 'Kemalism';[9] the cult around Sun Yat-sen as 'father' of the Chinese Republic;[10] or the cult of Marshall Piłsudski in interwar Poland, the 'saviour of the East' against Soviet Russian military advances.[11]

However, the paradigmatic instances of modern personality cults clearly stem from twentieth-century party dictatorships of fascist, socialist, or Ba'ath ideological origins. Despite important differences, these cults of party leaders share a number of common features beyond the general criteria mentioned at the beginning of this section. They, first, are often deeply imbued with nationalism and tend to identify the fate of the nation with the fate of the party and its current leader. Criticizing the leader as symbol of the party therefore becomes coterminous with betrayal of the nation and is harshly persecuted. Second, the emergence of leader cults is strongly encouraged through the lack of rules governing political ascent and survival. Patronage networks and sycophancy, while not being restricted to party dictatorships only, develop naturally in a climate characterized by asymmetric communications patterns, and are further encouraged by political uncertainty and violence. Third, party dictators mostly relied on mass festivals and rituals to stage participation and approval. May Day parades, commemorative events, or party assemblies provided important occasions of communicating present policies, and of renewing claims to power within the process.

The obvious goal behind the instigation of modern personality cults was to generate a unifying effect, the creation of a communicative space, which served to centre loyalties

and emotions in the persona of the leader.[12] The cult stipulated a mythical reality, which did not necessarily have to be believed but had to be acted upon in manifold rituals of power. And yet the cult cannot be reduced to the intentions of its instigators alone, as mid-level and local adaptations came to shape the leader cults in different ways. The following section provides an overview about how the cult phenomenon spread within the socialist camp and how it was contemporaneously justified.

Genealogies and Justifications

While Italian Fascism and German National Socialism were clearly focused on millenarian leader figures promising national rejuvenation, communist emphasis on the dictatorship of the proletariat did not automatically translate into the propagation of a leader cult. Marx and Engels had several times branded individual worship, both within the communist movement and accorded to themselves, as 'lick-spitting' and 'insufferable'. Yet tendencies to justify personalized worship within communist ideology existed early on. Marxist theoretician Georgii Plekhanov was among the first to provide an ideological fundament for elevating certain individuals above others. In his essay *On the Role of the Individual in History*, originally published in 1898, Plekhanov built upon ideas of Thomas Carlyle on hero worship to argue that some individuals were capable of synthesizing past developments and of organizing the masses in overcoming present social needs according to the general laws of historical determinist development. This type of man, Plekhanov argued, should be perceived as a true hero:

> But he is a hero not in the sense that he can stop or change the natural course of things, but in the sense that his activities are the conscious and free expression of this inevitable and unconscious course. Herein lies all his significance; herein lies his whole power. But this significance is colossal, and the power is terrible.[13]

Most attempts to justify personality cults within communist party dictatorships relied on this argument, of certain individuals being able to synthesize the current needs of the times and of guiding the masses towards the historically predetermined solution. Other factors weighed in as well, including the micro-level socialization of new members in party cells based on strict hierarchies and the importance of inner-party patronage networks to secure political ascent. The influence of traditional cults around monarchs or emperors should not be negated either, even in highly unlikely settings. In Korea, for example, the forced adaptation of the Japanese emperor cult in the early twentieth century came to strongly influence the later Kim dynasty cult.[14]

The first full-blown socialist leader cult was the posthumous cult of Lenin. While Lenin had received occasional public veneration prior to his death, it was only after 1924 that a true cult emerged. Benno Ennker has shown that the political decision to embalm and display Lenin publicly was not based on Russian folk tradition or religious sentiment, but

on purely utilitarian motives.[15] Public emotion could be invoked to stabilize party rule by employing the cult as a means of sociopolitical integration. The loyalty oaths at the bier, the public mourning, and the permanent conservation of the corpse in a mausoleum served to transform Lenin into a symbol of the Bolshevik movement and to create a political myth around the deceased, which lent itself to exploiting emotional attachment. The cult was to provide the populace with a personalized image of communism, a brand symbol, which incited socially binding effects similar to religion or nationalism, both of which were criticized as outdated or harmful during the early Bolshevik period.

By transforming Lenin into political myth, the cult came to play an important role in inner-party feuds as well. After his death, controlling the cult symbols became 'a context and a currency for the playing out of elite conflict'.[16] In the end it was Stalin who defeated his opponents and instigated his personal worship based on the notion of being Lenin's 'most faithful pupil'. By the late 1920s, Stalin gained control over the party media and centrally orchestrated his personality cult, which forcefully pervaded the public sphere on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday in December 1929. The early Stalin cult was a semantic rather than visual phenomenon and took the form of loyalty pledges from party and army leaders, as well as congratulatory addresses published by representatives from all walks of life.[17]

While the posthumous veneration of Lenin must be considered the earliest socialist cult, it was the cult of Stalin that came to exert the greatest influence on the international proliferation of socialist leader cults. As the worship of Stalin in the public sphere was consolidated in the mid-1930s, many foreign party representatives studying in the Soviet Union were thoroughly exposed to the workings and aesthetics of the Stalin cult, and would try to model their own veneration on the Soviet example later. They simultaneously witnessed the close interrelation of enforced public worship and terror, as purges and mass killings accompanied the consolidation of Stalin's personal dictatorship. The public Stalin cult reached its apogee at the leader's seventieth birthday in 1949, when socialist cult adepts from within the sphere of socialist influence gathered in Moscow to celebrate and learn from this mother of all socialist leader cults.

The cults of Lenin and Stalin may be understood as prototypes for the two dominant variants of socialist leader cults: first, the institutionalized, mostly posthumous employment of leaders as symbols transfigured into historical myth, to be skilfully exploited by the present leadership for the purpose of providing revolutionary legitimacy; and second, the cults of living party leaders, permeated by demonstrations of unity and faith in the leader, and linked to the violent suppression of potential enemies. Both types served to centre loyalties and public emotion in the symbol of the leader, yet only in the latter case did a possible discrepancy between individual ambition and party interests come to constitute a danger, since a living leader could employ his symbolic resources to harm the organization that had enabled his rise to power in the first place. The reverse phenomenon of communist parties relying on the iconic image of a no longer all-powerful leader may be found in a few cases too, such as in North Vietnam during the late 1960s, when the cult of the still living Hồ Chí Minh served to strengthen the power of his rival Lê Duẩn.[18]

Only very few socialist cults emerged prior to the end of the Second World War. One example is the posthumous cult around Sukhe Baatar as founder of the Mongolian People's Republic, and the cult of his successor Khorloogiin Choibalsan, who closely copied Stalin's policies and leadership practices.[19] Much better known is the cult of Mao Zedong, by 1945 chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), who had consciously built up his public image as the party's foremost theoretician, political leader, and military strategist. First traces of his cult had appeared in the Chinese media by 1937, including the instrumentalization of his quasi-autobiography in Edgar Snow's famous reportage *Red Star over China*. By the early 1940s, Mao had not only successfully defeated his inner-party rivals, but had effectively institutionalized his worship during the so-called rectification campaign of 1942–3. For many of Mao's colleagues the competition with Guomindang leader Chiang Kai-shek for the right to rule China played a major role in bringing about the elevation of Mao as the CCP's brand symbol.[20] By 1945, Mao Zedong had effectively purged his rivals and installed a political myth centred on himself as 'saviour' of the Chinese revolution.

The heyday of socialist leader cults may be observed between the late 1940s and Khrushchev's secret speech in February 1956. With the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945 and the onset of the Cold War, socialist cults flourished in Central and Eastern Europe, and also in East and South East Asia. While socialist cult-building in East Asia often grew out of national liberation movements and thus could count on a certain amount of public support, the European counterparts faced the difficulty of accommodating the predominance of the Soviet Union and the Stalin cult over national leaders in public discourse. In Poland, for example, the former cult around anti-Soviet war hero Marshall Piłsudski was attacked and instead Stalin was portrayed as the 'unbending friend'[21] and protector of Polish independence. In East Germany, on the other hand, cult rhetoric focused on Stalin's role as guarantor of German unity.[22] The Stalin cult was to used to foster emotional integration within the Soviet bloc and thus remained the ultimate arbiter of cult discourse until his death in 1953. Local leader cults were only possible in the form of sub-cults as Stalin's 'most faithful pupil'.[23] The only exception to this was the cult of Josip Broz Tito in Yugoslavia following his break with Stalin in 1948. While immediately after the war, Stalin had been depicted as guarantor of Yugoslav unity and stability, the increasingly tense atmosphere allowed for merging worship of Tito personally with nationalist-partisan sentiments and served to generate a charismatic situation that gained the cult greater acceptance. Public veneration of Tito was symbolized through a baton, termed 'Tito's baton' (after 1956 'youth baton'),[24] which was carried around the country every year before being offered to Tito on his birthday.[25] Most other East European cults, however, failed to gain popular appeal because they lacked convincing narratives in which the cults could be embedded. Primary examples for these turgid, partly cynical leader cults may be found in the Czech Republic around Klement Gottwald or in Hungary around Mátyás Rákosi.

Until 1956, leader cults in the socialist sphere were a matter of political practice rather than theoretical analysis. It was Nikita Khrushchev's 'secret speech' in February 1956 that brought the phenomenon of the leader cult to international attention and firmly

rooted the term 'cult of personality' in public discourse. Khrushchev vaguely linked the atrocities of the Stalin era to the cult, which had seemingly served to inhibit the remaining party leadership, including Khrushchev himself, from objecting to Stalin's cruelties. The speech resulted in a severe legitimacy crisis in several socialist countries, culminating in demonstrations and rebellions in Poland and Hungary. However, the speech not only influenced state–society relations but also led to intense debates and struggles within several communist parties on how to deal with the question of personality cults in the future. Even in North Korea and Mongolia the cults of Kim Il Sung and Choibalsan's successor, Tsedenbal, along with their Stalinist visions of modernization, were strongly albeit unsuccessfully attacked.[26] Among the East European communist party leaders who had cultivated a personality cult, only Tito, Enver Hoxha in Albania, and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in Romania politically survived de-Stalinization as party leaders.

Khrushchev failed to offer a convincing explanation for the emergence of socialist leader cults and this lacuna posed a dangerous threat to the legitimacy of communist party rule. It was the CCP which came to provide an official explanation for the emergence of leader cults within socialist systems by linking its emergence to relics of emperor worship or 'petit-bourgeois' thinking among the masses.[27] Along with Stalin's departure from collective leadership, these 'feudal remnants' were said to have provided a fertile soil for the emergence of personality cults. In Romania, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej relied on similar strategies by arguing:

> It is sometimes disgusting to see and listen to petit-bourgeois elements with their velvet-like tongues or sharp and long ones, who know how to spread this cult of personality. The petit-bourgeois or those persons dominated by petit-bourgeois spirit always need superhumans. When superhumans disappear a kind of vacuum occurs around them, they are seized by despair, confusion, lack of focus. They are not able to see where the force of our Party comes from, the grandiose achievements of our working people.[28]

Gheorghiu-Dej succeeded in mimicking a critical debate on personality cults, while simultaneously relegating the blame for the cult emergence on a group of schemers within the party and on still unreformed petit-bourgeois mentalities.

Among the few who openly justified the continued existence of personality cults after 1956 was Mao Zedong, who after a brief period of cult criticism in China distinguished between 'correct' and 'incorrect' personality cults in a speech in March 1958:

> There are two kinds of personality cults. One [kind of cult] is correct, for example we have to worship the correct things of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin and to worship them forever. Not to worship them is not possible. Truth is in their hands, why shouldn't we worship them? […] Another kind of cult is incorrect, without adding our own analysis, blindly obeying, this is just not right. […] The problem does not rest with the cult of the individual but with whether it represents the truth or not.

> If it represents the truth, it should be worshipped. If it does not, even collective leadership won't work.[29]

Mao had witnessed the devastating impact of de-Stalinization on Soviet bloc unity and blamed Khrushchev for discarding world socialism's most prominent symbol. Despite the obvious dialectical idiosyncrasies, the quotation explicates the notion of fostering personality cults as 'cults of truth' above merely demanding obedience from fellow communist leaders. Albanian leader Enver Hoxha, who closely followed the Maoist example, echoed this line, criticizing other leaders' cults in order to bring them down during the Sino-Soviet rift in the early 1960s. However, the idea of truth played an increasingly diminished role in propagating personality cults after the secret speech.

In the mid-1960s, Mao consciously fostered his cult for strategic purposes to increase his power vis-à-vis the party bureaucracy, culminating in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–9). While the public Stalin cult was reduced in times of crisis and terror, probably to detach the leader from these excesses, the Mao cult served the goal of mobilizing the populace and thus was strongest in periods of upheaval. The Cultural Revolution is the primary example of the danger of cultivating the worship of a living leader for communist party states, since Mao called for permanent revolution and the destruction of party bureaucracies. Steering the country via symbolic politics, however, failed to produce the desired results. The lack of coordinating institutions ultimately resulted in cult anarchy, with multiple actors claiming their loyalty to the 'chairman' while striving for different aims. From late 1967 on, therefore, the army was called in to enforce a unified understanding of Mao's sayings, using cult rituals as means of discipline. By mid-1969 political order had been re-established and 'formalistic' symbolism and rituals were officially interdicted. The Cultural Revolutionary Mao cult had a profound influence not only on Western students and academics, but also within the communist movement. Enver Hoxha, Nicolae Ceauşescu, and Kim Il Sung clearly modelled aspects of their cult on Chinese precedents. In Africa, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia, and Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire partly relied on Maoist strategies to shape their respective leadership cults.[30]

The generational change within most communist party leaderships in the late 1970s and 1980s led to a marked downturn of personality cults. After Mao's death in 1976, his short-term successor Hua Guofeng tried to install his own leader cult, yet the manipulation of media images turned out to be insufficient to secure party rule. Without networks based on charismatic relationships through party and government, Deng Xiaoping quickly shoved him to the sidelines. Deng, who had been closely involved in countering the disruptive influences of de-Stalinization in China, avoided a Khrushchev-style accusation against his predecessor. The cult of personality was said to have been employed by political schemers to usurp power and to be done away with in the future. This move led to alienation from its erstwhile ally Albania, where the cult of Hoxha continued until the dictator's death in 1985 and even beyond.

By the mid-1980s, with the exception of the Kim cult in North Korea and the institutionalized worship of Nicolae Ceauşescu in Romania, socialist personality cults had by

and large been reduced to ritual acclamation of party supremacy and were stripped of their more excessive guises. The cults and their symbols came under heavy attack during the exit from communism, when statues of leaders were torn down and the Ceauşescus were lynched by an angry mob. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, personality cults have continued to blossom in authoritarian dictatorships in the Soviet periphery, such as Turkmenistan or Belarus. Among the nominally socialist countries, however, North Korea is the last to rely on the accustomed techniques and imagery of personality cults to stabilize its leadership claims. The other remaining socialist countries, especially the People's Republic of China (PRC), have opted for media techniques less vulnerable to public ridicule.

Research Agendas

For a long time, scholarly debates on communist party dictatorships focused on the functional aspects of personality cults within inner-party feuds or explained the phenomenon as arising from the leaders' vanity or psychological aberrations. While these factors are not irrelevant and continue to be emphasized here, scholarship in recent years has shifted attention from purely party- and leader-centred views to issues of state–society interactions, and to analysing the ways in which cult symbols and language are adapted to local contexts. In this section, three aspects shall be briefly discussed that feature prominently in present research and are in further need of scientific exploration: first, the theoretical concepts required to explain socialist leader cults; second, state and society interactions during mass festivals and rituals of power; and finally, cult products and material culture. While these topics are by no means exhaustive, they all serve to broaden our understanding of cults not only as crude tools of domination, but also as complex webs of signification that allow for multiple readings and reactions, and exert influence on both party and populace beyond the intentions of their instigators.

Theoretical Approaches

The earlier analysis has traced the different trajectories of socialist leader cults over time. While it has demonstrated that most socialist party leaders prior to 1949 took an active role in shaping and sustaining their respective cults, this does not explain why they came to rely on personality cults in the first place. Most studies invoke Max Weber's concept of charisma to explain the emergence of cult-like veneration in socialist party states. Already with Weber, however, the concept of charisma was criticized for a lack of clear definition and this has resulted occasionally in simplistic usages of the concept. In the case of many socialist leader cults, this danger has led scholars to focus less on essentialist notions of individual character traits and to expand the area of investigation to look at the role of the media in the construction of images and public perceptions. It has also

led scholars to look beyond the leader in order to explore 'charismatic relationships',[31] i.e. the use of the cult to build leader–follower relations based on utter devotion and loyalty. In this way the constructed nature of personality cults comes to the fore. Studies emphasizing these aspects frequently focus on both the development of political or social networks to back up individual leadership claims, and on representations of charismatic authority through the mass media.[32]

Modified concepts of charisma are well suited to explain the mobilizational strength of the leader cult in situations of crisis, a phenomenon visible in the cults of Kim Il Sung, Tito, or Mao Zedong. Yet in the case of Stalin, and rather astonishingly, the public cult was weakest during the Great Terror of 1937–8 and during the early stages of the Second World War. A recent study thus avoids the concept of charisma and relies on a modified concept of Edward Shils's universalistic notion of 'sacredness'.[33] According to Shils, every society has a central zone, which 'partakes of the nature of the sacred'.[34] This concept has the advantage of not necessarily invoking the tripartite conception of traditional, charismatic, and bureaucratic/rational rule, explicated by Weber, since in the case of the major socialist cults these dimensions intersected. Moreover, it provides the cult with a more established and 'routinized'[35] quality than a Weberian approach, yet the assumption of a central zone needs to be modified according to specific historical circumstances. A further advantage of this Shilsian approach is its ability to encompass the religious dimensions of several of the socialist leadership cults without claiming that the cult or communism itself represented a political religion. There is both the danger of neglecting religious sentiments within the reception of the cult, and of prematurely claiming analogies between traditional forms of worship and modern political cults. Researchers face this danger when seeking to read the meanings inscribed into contemporary documents such as internal opinion reports, oral history, or forms of material culture. There is still a great gap between studies of personality cults at the level of political elites and the meanings attached to these cults within local contexts.

Mass Festivals and Rituals of Power

Rituals and festivals fulfilled important functions. They provided the communist parties and their leaders with an occasion of demonstrating the regime's strength and vigour, and of communicating their views of societal relations and world affairs to a wider audience. This communicative or educational aspect of providing the populace with a hegemonic understanding of the present situation clearly accounts for the importance attached to celebrations of party rule by the respective authorities. Symbolic politics was not only a secondary phenomenon to enable the visualization of the party leadership, but a powerful means of centring loyalties, communicating policies, and, not least, of periodically renewing the party leadership's self-perception.

The introduction of a new revolutionary calendar and celebrations in honour of the proletarian dictatorship came to structure public life around certain dates, some of which, such as Labour Day, were celebrated throughout the socialist world, while

others, most importantly the respective founding anniversaries and leader birthdays, varied according to place. The Soviet festivals usually included elaborately arranged forms of popular participation through parades or carefully choreographed mass ornaments. They were often accompanied by smaller scale rituals of loyalty at the factory or commune level, which ranged from mandatory self-criticisms for failing to live up to certain socialist ideals to quasi-religious forms of ritually worshipping cult effigies.

In her pioneering study of rituals in Soviet society, Christel Lane termed the underlying instrumentalist conception of festivals and rituals a 'tool of cultural management'.[36] These rare instances of contact between the leaders and the led were indeed crucial for the formation of social identities. For the party leadership the rituals ideally signified public legitimacy and self-assurance. Within the attending crowd, every participant as part of a larger social group was assigned a clearly defined status vis-à-vis the party centre. This served to demonstrate the 'social, ethnical, and spatial hierarchies, which ideally were to structure the social body of Soviet society'.[37] Yet as Lane's own work and the research of others have subsequently shown, mass festivals and rituals did not only play a conservative role in social engineering. The outcome of these rituals of power was far from uniform and the necessarily high degree of standardization was difficult to reproduce in local settings. While research on the official staging and planning of these rituals of powers allows for interesting insights into the regime's self-perception and policy aims, it is important to emphasize that they were not only tools of repression, but could be productive in various senses.

To reconstruct local meanings of the leader cult and its rituals is of primary importance in gaining a better understanding of how the cult was actually exercised and adapted. At lower levels especially the official script was infused with different layers of signification, including older religious traditions. As Karen Petrone observed: 'Official celebrations at the local level often turned into apolitical dances, a cover for religious practices or, worse yet, drunken brawls.'[38] During China's Cultural Revolution, phenomena such as 'loyalty dances', rituals of 'asking for instruction in the morning and reporting back in the evening', or even Chairman Mao 'quotation gymnastics' sprang up. While these rituals expressed unconditional devotion to Mao Zedong in every word and deed, the party leadership was less than happy with them, since they were said to lack political content and even to provide room for opposition to the centre.[39] Tracing the adaptations of the cult rituals, which differed greatly according to cultural context, is a valuable approach in distinguishing common features and specific expressions of socialist leader cults. It helps to understand how the cult and the embodied values were communicated and adapted, and allows for a more nuanced understanding of state–society interactions in shaping and sustaining leader cults.

Cult Products and Material Culture

A major difficulty in dealing with personality cults is their opacity. Even in Stalinist Russia or Maoist China there was no 'cult ministry' to centrally coordinate or prescribe

all forms of the cult. While the respective departments or ministries of propaganda and culture played a major role in standardizing public imagery or in planning parades, to look at the official side alone fails to account for the myriad of cult products that came to pervade everyday life and for the meanings attached to them. These cult products could take on many shapes and ranged from linguistic or musical offerings to the leader, such as poetry or songs, to physical manifestations in the form of badges, images, or in case of the Mao cult even plastic mangos.

Official symbols of leader cults such as statues or heroic paintings range among the most common products associated with socialist leader worship. Yet despite the impression of uniformity, there are notable discrepancies with regard to both artistic style and official encouragement that need to be discussed in greater detail. In China, for example, leader statues and other public instances of the cult were explicitly forbidden in March 1949 and only during the Cultural Revolution was this trend reversed, as competing factions tried to demonstrate their supreme allegiance to Mao through manufacturing massive statues and other cult symbols. The lack of official permission to construct these physical cult manifestations was declared to stem from the leader's modesty, and should therefore not be taken as a hindrance to express utmost love and devotion to him.

The pretence of representing a scientific and rational system of rule set certain limits on the self-proclamation of a leader's genius, at least up to Khrushchev's secret speech. The creation or presentation of cult products and symbols therefore had to be couched in the rhetoric of spontaneous praise or gifts from domestic and foreign benefactors of socialist rule. This public image, of a leader seemingly reluctant to accept public expressions of adoration, seems to be a universal feature of socialist leader cults and has been termed 'immodest modesty'.[40] Still the details of how certain leaders handled and steered their respective cults need to be elucidated further.

As official propaganda emphasized the leader's devotion of his time and talent to his people, his magnanimity needed to be reciprocated through arduous commitment to the socialist cause and occasionally through 'counter-gifts' to the great leader. As Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov and Olga Sosnina have demonstrated for the Stalin cult, the manufacturing and presentation of gifts played an important role in socialist societies, both in strengthening patron–client relationships and in crafting social identities through the act of gift-giving.[41] Retracing the specific meanings attached to these objects, or the 'social life of things',[42] constitutes a useful way of avoiding strict binaries, such as worship/resistance, and exploring the complexities of social relations mediated through cult objects in socialist party states.

Conclusion

Cults of personality are not simply epiphenomena of totalitarian leaders' fantasies but powerfully evocative instances of symbolic politics, which came to shape party

representation and state–society interactions in multiple ways. While the cults were envisioned to function as tools for centring public emotions in the persona of the leader, the cults along with their accompanying rituals and cult objects came to assume various roles that cannot be reduced to official ascriptions alone. This article has outlined a brief genealogy of socialist leader cults and pointed to certain areas of research in need of further exploration. Special emphasis should in the future be given to comparative perspectives, as by now a number of detailed case studies exist that have provided the groundwork for fresh attempts at theorizing and explaining socialist leader cults. Yet it should not be forgotten that cults were indissociable from closed societies and a great deal of violence and fear. Therefore recent attempts to reclaim the existence of political genius and its instrumentality in inciting mass belief should be treated with great scepticism, especially when those subscribing to other interpretations are labelled 'fools' or as incapable of grasping the true meaning of genius.[43] For ultimately cults always remain fixated on dogma and inhibit critical discussion.

Notes

1. 'Kim Jong Il Passes Away (Urgent)', *Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)*, 19 December 2011 <http://kcna.co.jp/item/2011/201112/news19/20111219-02ee.html>.
2. 'Natural Wonders Observed', *KCNA*, 21 December 2011 <http://kcna.co.jp/item/2011/201112/news21/20111221-49ee.html>.
3. 'CPRK Warns Rat-like Lee Myung Bak Group of Its Most Miserable End', *KCNA*, 23 April 2012 <http://kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201204/news23/20120423-52ee.html>.
4. For the case of Laos, see Grant Evans, *The Politics of Ritual and Remembrance: Laos since 1975* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1998), esp. 24–40. For Vietnam, see Martin Großheim, *Ho Chi Minh. Der geheimnisvolle Revolutionär* (Munich: Beck Verlag, 2011), 149–56.
5. Edward Berenson and Eva Giloi (eds.), *Constructing Charisma: Celebrity, Fame, and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2010).
6. Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), p. xvii.
7. Timothy Cheek, 'Introduction: The Making and Breaking of the Party-State in China', in Timothy Cheek and Tony Saich (eds.), *New Perspectives on State Socialism in China* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 7.
8. Plamper, *Stalin Cult*, p. xviii. It should be noted that the Kim family cult in North Korea strongly relied on androgynous or even maternal depictions of the Kims as 'parent leaders', and further included sub-cults around Kim Il Sung's mother and wife; see B. R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves—And Why It Matters* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2010), 105–6.
9. M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 184–5.
10. The most comprehensive account is Chen Yunqian, *Chongbai yu jiyi. Sun Zhongshan zhuhao de jiangou yu chuanbo* [Worship and Memory: The Construction and Propagation of the Political Symbol Sun Zhongshan] (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2009).
11. See Heidi Hein, *Der Piłsudski-Kult und seine Bedeutung für den polnischen Staat 1926–1939* (Marburg: Herder Verlag, 2002).

12. See Daniel Leese, 'The Mao Cult as Communicative Space', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 8/3–4 (2007), 623–39.
13. Plekhanov, Georgii, *Lun geren zai lishi shang de zuoyong* [On the Role of the Individual in History] (Moscow: Waiguowen shuji chubanju, 1950), 43–4.
14. Myers, *Cleanest Race*, 27.
15. Benno Ennker, *Die Anfänge des Lenin-Kults in der Sowjetunion* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1997), 315–38.
16. Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 183.
17. Plamper, *Stalin Cult*, 36.
18. Großheim, *Ho Chi Minh*, 140.
19. The cults of Sukhe Baatar, Choibalsan, and the latter's successor Yumjaagiin Tsedenbal are still in need of further study. On the early cult, see Shagdariin Sandag and Harry H. Kendall, *Poisoned Arrows: The Stalin–Choibalsan Mongolian Massacres, 1921–1941* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 37–49.
20. See Daniel Leese, *Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual during China's Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 7–12.
21. Jan C. Behrends, 'Exporting the Leader: The Stalin Cult in Poland and East Germany (1944/5–1956)', in Balázs Apor, Jan C. Behrends, Polly Jones, and E. A. Rees (eds.), *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships: Stalin and the Eastern Bloc* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2004), 164.
22. Behrends, 'Exporting the Leader', 169.
23. See Izabella Main, ' "President of Poland" or "Stalin's Most Faithful Pupil"? The Cult of Bolesław Bierut in Stalinist Poland', in Apor et al. (eds.), *Leader Cult*, 179.
24. See Marc Zivojinovic, 'Der jugoslawische Tito-Kult. Mythologisierte Motive und ritualisierte Kulthandlungen', in Benno Ennker and Heidi Hein-Kircher (eds.), *Der Führer im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Marburg: Herder Verlag, 2010), 192.
25. Stanislav Sretenovic and Artan Puto, 'Leader Cults in the Western Balkans (1945–1990): Josip Broz Tito and Enver Hoxha', in Apor et al. (eds.), *Leader Cult*, 211.
26. On North Korean developments, see 'New Evidence on North Korea in 1956', in Christian F. Ostermann (ed.), *Inside China's Cold War* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2007/8), 447–527.
27. See Leese, *Mao Cult*, 34.
28. Alice Mocanescu, 'Surviving 1956: Gheorghe Gheorghui-Dej and the "Cult of Personality" in Romania', in Apor et al. (eds.), *Leader Cult*, 252.
29. *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* [Long Live Mao Zedong Thought] (n.p.: 1969), 162.
30. The African nationalist-socialist leader cults are in need of further study to stimulate comparative analyses.
31. See M. Rainer Lepsius, 'The Model of Charismatic Leadership and Its Applicability to the Rule of Adolf Hitler', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 7/2 (2006), 175.
32. For an excellent overview of crucial issues confronting research on twentieth-century European leader cults, see Benno Ennker, 'Der Führer im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts—eine Synthese', in Ennker and Hein-Kircher (eds.), *Führer*, 347–78.
33. Plamper, *Stalin Cult*, p. xvi.
34. Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 3.
35. For an interesting discussion of these questions by historians of Soviet Russia, see <http://russianhistoryblog.org/2012/04/the-stalin-cult-once-more-on-weber-reception/>.

36. Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society; The Soviet Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2.
37. Malte Rolf, *Das sowjetische Massenfest* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2006), 170, author's translation.
38. Karen Petrone, *Life has Become more Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 205.
39. Compare Leese, *Mao Cult*, chapters 9 and 10.
40. See Plamper, *Stalin Cult*, 123–4.
41. Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov and Olga Sosnina, 'The Faculty of Useless Things. Gifts to Soviet Leaders', in Klaus Heller and Jan Plamper (eds.), *Personality Cults in Stalinism—Personenkulte im Stalinismus* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2004), 279.
42. Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
43. See Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, trans David Macey and Steve Corcoran (London: Verso, 2010), 149–55, 103.

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CHAPTER 20

COMMUNIST REVOLUTION AND POLITICAL TERROR

JULIA C. STRAUSS

Before building, one has to destroy

Thâm Thệ Hà (1949)

From the earliest writing on great social revolutions, terror has been seen as integral to the revolutionary process. This is as true for practitioners of revolution from Robespierre, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot as it is for a lineage of external commentators and analysts from Edmund Burke to Crane Brinton, Robert Conquest, and contemporary scholarship on China in the 1950s and 1960s. The twin phenomena of terror and revolution are so intertwined that they go together like mother and child: it is close to impossible to imagine one without the other. Indeed by definition the labelling of a process as a great revolution presupposes the existence of some degree of terror. All clear and obvious cases of great political and social revolutions, from the French to the Cambodian, have by definition first involved some degree of political violence in initially coming to power and vanquishing whichever old regime happened to be in power at the time (be it monarchical, colonial, or nationalist). Old regimes, and conservative new ones, have also not scrupled to use political violence to come to or remain in power. Where revolutionary regimes in general, and communist regimes in particular, part company from non-revolutionary regimes is in the degree to which they have been historically willing—indeed compelled—to deploy escalating degrees of extreme political violence domestically in order to 1) secure the revolution; 2) rid the regime of increasingly large numbers of both real and imagined enemies; and 3) in many cases ultimately turn inward on the revolutionary elite itself in order to prevent 'counter-revolutionary' backsliding. This essay seeks to define the contours of terror in Marxist-Leninist states, focusing both on what the major communist regimes held in common in their respective implementation of terror, and on what they did differently in the form, arena, and targeting of suspect enemies of the revolution. It holds that revolutionary terror, while affected by the temperament and predispositions of the top leaders of the communist

party at the time of its implementation, was more a function of how that leadership perceived the challenges it faced and how different leaderships resorted to a relatively crude policy instrument—the campaign—in order to meet those challenges.

The Soviet Union's formative experiences of civil war, forced collectivization, and ever wider waves of terror against presumptive internal enemies, both within and outside the Communist Party, established a template that other communist parties in power variously imitated, adjusted, reacted against, and occasionally amplified in the light of their own domestic and regional security circumstances. Full-scale Terror with a capital T was not, a priori, irreversibly encoded into the DNA of communist revolution: some states experienced relatively more severe, protracted, or spasmodic versions of terror than others. But common to all communist states were factors, albeit influential to varying degrees, that systematically removed constraints on the prosecution of terror as a means to guarantee the revolution. These included: 1) the domestic and regional levels of (in)security in the environments in which communist parties operated as they set about building states and implementing the revolution; 2) the mental maps shared by communist leaderships that glorified struggle, insisted on the infallibility of the vanguard Party in speeding up history, and reduced individuals to impersonal and dehumanizing categories such as 'elements'; and 3) paradoxically, the regime's own early successes in removing social and economic groups that could mute revolutionary initiatives. In Poland, for example, social circumstances such as the relative strength of the Catholic Church and deep mass suspicion of the Soviet Union blunted the full revolutionary impulse from the outset. There the Communist Party was not able to push through a thorough collectivization of agriculture, and refrained from conducting purges and show trials of its top leadership, at a time when exactly this sort of activity was going on in Bulgaria, Romania, and Czeckoslovakia. Conversely, in Cambodia, governments and social organizations capable of resisting the Khmer Rouge collapsed so quickly and so thoroughly that there was no social or political force within Cambodia capable of resisting the new regime's revolutionary excesses of extreme terror. Once external enemies were vanquished and obvious internal challengers to the revolutionary regime dispatched, the logical place for the revolution to turn was inward, with ever higher burdens of proof upon individuals to establish their revolutionary credentials. Each of these factors came together in a particular method of policy implementation of extraordinary focus and prosecution: the campaign.

What Is This Thing Called Terror? Concepts, Claims, and Numbers

While political violence, even extreme political violence, has been recorded as a means of extirpating enemies, heretics, and 'others' for as long as written history itself, terror as a legitimate, deliberate, and self-consciously applied instrument to rid the revolution of enemies and intimidate larger numbers of waverers emerged with the French

Revolution, antedating the emergence of successful communist revolutions by more than a century. As early as Robespierre, the original architect of revolutionary terror on the Committee for Public Safety for the French Revolution, terror was deemed to be nothing more or less than a necessary component of the Revolution: 'Terror is nothing else than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; … an emanation of virtue.'[1] Thus even without a Marxist-Leninist idiom of speeding up history through the vanquishing of counter-revolutionary 'elements', 'Terror' was, from the outset, linked directly to concretizing revolutionary virtue, and by implication, cleansing revolutionary state and society of impurity. This intertwining of terror, virtue, and cleansing through bloodshed has continued to animate much of the justification for revolutionary terror ever since.

While there is significant controversy over both the timing and the degree to which the first great leader of communist revolution, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, condoned terror as a regular instrument of the revolution, it is irrefutable that in the wake of two assassination attempts (the second of which almost succeeded) in 1918, he did sanction the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission, the Cheka, to carry out Red Terror against those associated with the Whites.[2] The Cheka went through later name changes to the GPU, OGPU, NKVD, and finally the KGB, but throughout its evolution it functioned as a secret organization with enormous and shadowy powers outside regular Party channels, with a direct line to the top. It became most visible during the Stalinist 'Great Terror' of the late 1930s, when the list of real and potential enemies was ever expanding and deeply uncertain; but it continued to function throughout the remainder of the existence of the Soviet Union—and by some lights beyond the Soviet Union, when powerful operators within the KGB continued to dominate Russian politics at elite levels, notwithstanding the demise of communism. There is as well considerable evidence that NKVD cadres played important roles in the consolidation of communist regimes in Eastern Europe after the Second World War, setting up organizations of repression, acting as direct lines of communication between Stalin and communist party leaders in the new people's democracies, and on occasion taking the lead in the interrogation of important political prisoners.[3]

Outside the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, methods of deploying terror varied. In the Chinese case, implementation was largely in the hands of local cadres rather than a secret police system. The Chinese Communist Party continued to insist publicly that only a small minority of the population was irredeemably beyond the pale, and that the vast majority of people were good. In practice, however, Mao did not scruple to condone terror. In the early years of regime consolidation of the People's Republic of China the party-state launched campaigns of terror against landlords, 'corrupt' bureaucrats, and 'corrupt' businessmen; later in the 1950s against presumptive subversives and 'rightists', and some fifteen years later through the extra-party mobilization of Red Guards at the outset of the Cultural Revolution to publicly humiliate presumptively reactionary power holders and 'remnants' of the old society. In its most extreme form in a communist state, the terror of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia was implemented by young cadres bound to an ideology that systematically insisted that any kind of regularity in bureaucratic organization was antithetical to the revolution. They implemented terror in strikingly

direct ways—from a mass forced march of the entirety of the urban population out of the capital, to outright mass execution, to starvation and neglect of hundreds of thousands coerced into work camps. In the end the Cambodian version of terror was directly responsible for the deliberate imprisonment and/or extermination of an astonishing 20 per cent plus of its entire population.

While terror is clear enough to define when its chief revolutionary perpetrators (Robespierre, Stalin, the Khmer Rouge) openly invoke it as such, when the party leadership refrains from labelling political violence as 'terror', the borders between garden variety political coercion and fully-fledged terror as a deliberate instrument of policy become much more ambiguous. There are as yet no commonly agreed standards by which revolutionary, Marxist-Leninist 'Red Terror' might be distinguished from other, pre-Leninist forms of revolutionary terror, or communist versions of terror from the assorted manifestations of political violence from the 'White' terrors unleashed by status quo powers in response to fears about communism. Even within communist states, it is far from clear how to delineate periods of 'terror' from workaday coerciveness and repression. Terror's scale, timing, and clarity of targets have varied enormously from period to period, state to state, and often region to region within a state. The impact of terror has similarly varied between different groups and for individuals: what was experienced by one group or individual to be an extreme form of terror, for many others might have been nothing more than a faraway or temporary nuisance. For example, within Czechoslovakia, the Slánský trial of the late 1940s, which improbably accused the top elite of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party of engaging in Zionist conspiracies, was a searing event. It was also widely understood within Eastern European Stalinist elites as putting them all on notice: if Stalin disapproved of a particular faction's methods or associates (as was the case in Romania and Bulgaria), the consequences could be a dramatic fall from grace or worse. But in comparison to the much more widely deployed terror in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, China in the early 1950s, or Cambodia in the 1970s, the Slánský trial was a relatively contained affair, however unfortunate it clearly was for the unlucky defendants.

There are no agreed-upon metrics for gauging terror, and delineating terror and its effects is a notoriously politicized business. As Arno Mayer so cogently put it, 'there can be no revolution without counterrevolution: both as phenomenon and process, they are inseparable, like truth and falsehood': both revolution and counter-revolution mutually feed on violence, terror as a form of ultra-violence, and vengeance that animates terror. Despite the historical distance that we now have on communist revolution, conceptualizing terror and assigning responsibility for it still engenders a great deal of emotion and basic disagreement about how to count communism's many victims. Revolutions by definition engender violence and strong resistance, both within society and beyond the borders of the revolutionary state:[4] which side of the divide one comes down on has a great deal to do with how the particular form of political violence in a given revolutionary regimes is conceptualized, categorized, and counted. For all the attention paid to the question of extreme political violence in communist systems, there is still little agreement as to how to distinguish 'terror' from other forms of coercion and political violence

in revolutionary situations, and even less agreement about how to count the many millions of its victims in the communist variant of revolution between 1917 and 1993.

Revolutionary 'terror' is conceptually freighted with the origins of its first and second uses as a proper noun: 'The Terror' in revolutionary France, where revolution began 'to devour its own children' in highly visible and public ways, and Stalin's 'Great Terror' of the 1930s, which struck unpredictably at party elites, losers in faction fights, and significant subsections of the Soviet population. These two cases, although empirically important as templates for understanding the kinds of processes that lead to extraordinary revolutionary excesses, are but the most visible manifestations of practices associated with revolutionary violence. The archives that have become available in the past two decades reveal that there were many forms of extreme coercion and physical violence that communist regimes resorted to, with different levels of intensity, under very different kinds of conditions, and with substantively different types of targets.

This conceptual thicket has led to two broadly differing positions. 'Lumpers' focus on the human cost resulting from communist policies, and amass all categories of victims in one overarching set of horrifying and overwhelming numbers. For entirely understandable reasons, lumpers have been prominent in every generation since the beginning of scholarly reflection on communism. One of the key proponents of this approach is Robert Conquest, who has long had a stake in claiming very high numbers of victims of terror in the Soviet Union. After nearly forty years of writing on the subject, Conquest has recently updated his seminal work, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (2008), to claim a rough number of 20 million victims in the Soviet Union. The contemporary editors of the aptly titled *Black Book of Communism* (1999) estimate the total victims throughout the communist world to be an astonishing 94 million, roughly two-thirds of whom were in the People's Republic of China. And contemporary demographers who reconstruct numbers of excess deaths in the notoriously bloody twentieth century—i.e. deaths in excess of the statistically expected number of deaths in a population over a specific length of time—feature communist regimes prominently, although not exclusively.[5] A quick perusal of websites on the topic shows that many of the activities associated with terror (in lower-case letters) and 'The Terror' of the Stalinist Soviet Union and its imitators feature on lists of what is often called 'democide': purges, executions, forced deportations, and famine-induced excess deaths. It is natural to slide between terror and democide, since all forms of mass killings clearly involve a great deal of terror for the victims. The more careful of such websites[6] acknowledge the wide variation in estimates of excess deaths, with annotated citations, suggesting that these differences are down to a left–right bias on the part of the individual researcher or else are due to incomplete or inaccessible data. However this conflation of terror and excess deaths in general conceals more than it illuminates. Concentrated bursts of highly publicized political violence could be wielded against a targeted few *pour encourager les autres*, as was the case in the Slánský trial in post-war Czechoslovakia, without leading to democide. Moreover, many of the excess deaths that demographers have reconstructed were not the product of deliberately deployed terror to cow and intimidate specific, suspect

individuals or populations. Many of the millions of excess deaths under Stalin were due to famine induced by the ruthless and clumsy implementation of collectivization and by forced deportations. In China, horrific as the consequences of mass famine were in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Mao's Great Leap Forward was launched in a spirit of wild utopian optimism and wilful disregard for inconvenient truth rather than a deliberate desire to target enemies and starve the countryside. That said, one of the results of the Great Leap Forward was to silence moderate voices in the Chinese Communist Party who warned against the bureaucratic incentives that led to exaggerated production figures, increased procurement of grain, and consequent starvation in the countryside.

Ranged against the 'lumpers' are archival scholars such as J. Arch Getty and Hiroaki Kuromiya, who suggest that the excesses of Stalinism are quite bad enough without folding in the unintended consequences of ill-thought-out, centrally directed policies such as rapid collectivization with deliberately targeted killings. Others insist that it is important to attend to those who were targeted for repression. Michael Ellman's reconstruction of excess death statistics suggests that in the peak years of the Great Terror in the Soviet Union, the direct death rate (largely due to execution) was somewhere between 950,000 and 1,200,000—less than half the landlords (between 1 and 2 million) and counter-revolutionaries (712,000) executed in the two overlapping campaigns for land reform and the suppression of counterrevolutionaries in China in 1950–1. But in Ellman's estimation, if the Gulag 'only' contained around 2 million victims at any one time, 'throughput' in the years between 1930 and 1956 ranged to between 17 and 18 million.[7]

Inherent in the difference between the 'lumpers' and 'splitters' is the large analytical question of the degree to which political violence was *deliberately* deployed against specific targets or whether in many cases it was simply the terrible, but nonetheless unintentional collateral damage of ill-thought-out policies being implemented by ill-educated cadres in policy environments characterized by poverty, poor transport, and bad communications. To those unfortunate enough to be on the receiving end of extreme revolutionary violence, it mattered little whether the context was one of civil war, regime paranoia about internal subversion, power struggle at the top, or some combination of all of these factors. The millions who comprise the enormous excess death statistics through famine, bureaucratic incompetence, overwork, or insanitary conditions in prisons clearly did not make fine distinctions over the causes of the abuse to which they were subject. But these different contexts matter when one is seeking to understand the incentives, dynamics, and processes of terror and extreme political violence. Ideologically driven policies implemented over vast territories by ill-educated local cadres with often cavalier notions about the preservation of human life and dignity are not quite the same analytically as deliberately terrorizing a target population or sub-population in order to enforce compliance and acquiescence. On these grounds the 'splitters' have a real point in insisting that many of the excess deaths under communism (notably during the forced collectivizations of the early 1930s and the extraordinary famine after the Great Leap Forward in China) account for a substantial proportion of excess deaths.

Concomitant with this more careful delineation of deliberate terror vs. ill conceived and bungled bureaucratic policies are two larger issues: agreement about numbers and

assessing the impact beyond the verifiable numbers. For some areas, there is now a beginning of scholarly convergence on raw numbers. Most are now willing to accept a rough number of around 20 million including famine victims for the Soviet Union, and provisionally somewhere between 2 and 3 million for Cambodia, of whom roughly half were executed outright.[8] In other environments such as China, there is still little consensus on numbers of total victims of Maoist revolutionary policies; for the Great Leap Forward alone, estimates of excess deaths range from 15 to 40 million. Assessing the impact of such mass death is infinitely less quantifiable, since individuals are so very varied in their responses to extreme coercion. But it is certainly fair to suggest that for every one individual taken away and either deported, sent to a prison camp, or executed, there were likely many more who faced intimidating questioning by the secret police, lost their apartments, jobs, or life chances for education, and more still who lived in reasonable fear of these kinds of losses. If these much larger and more amorphous numbers are included in an enquiry into terror, then its real reach went much further than even the astonishingly high figure of 20 million for the Soviet Union suggests, even if it cannot be quantified with any precision.

Finally, the current archival evidence suggests that the application of terror—even in the same country and time period—has been very uneven. Places where the archives are at least relatively open, as is the case for Kiev and Shanghai, may not be representative for the country as a whole.[9] Until many more micro-studies are conducted, it will continue to be difficult to know how representative the evolution of terror in these areas in fact was. It is certain that virtually all of the campaigns involving terror in Mao's China were conducted with significantly more leniency in Shanghai than in remote rural areas in the south and west, where bureaucratic incentives for local cadres to prove themselves with high arrest and execution rates, the exceptionally low level of education of cadres, ongoing physical insecurity, and remoteness from central government scrutiny, all combined to produce much more severe repression than was the case in physically secure, affluent, well-educated, and well-policed Shanghai.[10] Conversely, the detailed stories of the accused (and often executed) unearthed by Kuromiya in the Kiev archives suggest that the vast majority of those targeted by the Great Terror of the late 1930s in Ukraine had foreign associations, were seen to have frequented foreign embassies, or worst of all were Polish, Catholic, or identifiably 'other'. Ukraine's ambiguous geography, border status, multi-ethnic nature, and historical close association with Poland may well have rendered the terror there different in kind (if not in scale) from elsewhere in the Soviet Union. In other important cases, in both the Soviet Union and China, while the top leadership may have unleashed campaigns of terror, it seems to have remained unaware of the true scale of local repression and its excesses until much later when, of course, it was far too late for the victims.

Thus there is still a great deal that is unknown about terror in the communist world. On the plus side, we are now beginning to see convergence over numbers of victims for such cases as Cambodia and the Soviet Union. There are now some very good studies from the fragmentary and ever-changing nature of the archival (and in Cambodia, physical) evidence. Scholars of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe are now beginning

to get archival access and make rough estimates of numbers of victims, at least in the early to mid-years of regime establishment and consolidation in the late 1940s and 1950s. But on the minus side, the concept of terror continues to be weighted down with contention over which phenomena and outcomes fall within its rubric. Research is still at an early enough stage that it is not certain how representative or non-representative the extant case studies, and their conclusions, might be. Conceptualizing the beginnings, processes, and dynamics of terror within and between different communist systems remains contested and rudimentary. Nevertheless, rather than conclude this essay at only the halfway point and say that there is nothing to be done, I will argue the opposite: that there *are* ways of thinking about terror in a comparative context, and there are ways to account for both the kind of terror that deliberately targeted 'suspect' individuals and groups, and the type that had a larger impact (starvation, exposure, death rates) on entire populations. If 'terror' is defined as the targeted and deliberate use of unpredictable political violence against real and imagined threats to the revolution, it turns out that there is a great deal to be said about the communist deployment of terror as one of the key instruments for accomplishing regime consolidation and implementing revolutionary programmes after coming to power.

Terror was, like many of the core programmes of the communist revolutionary state, generally implemented through the vehicle of the bureaucratic campaign, acting at the behest of a vanguard communist party whose policy line was, in principle, unchallengeable and infallible. With varying degrees of popular participation, campaigns were extraordinary periods of bureaucratic mobilization and intensification around a particular set of policy objectives, and were thus antithetical to 'regular' bureaucratic processes and procedures. Campaigns could be, and often were, relatively devoid of terror: campaigns to build factories, increase industrial output through 'storming', plant trees, or combat diseases such as schistosomiasis were all part of the standard repertoire of communist states. But many campaigns of revolutionary communist regimes, such as land reform or collectivization, incorporated terror as a way to mobilize core constituencies and overcome social resistance. Others, such as the 'Great Terror' of the Soviet Union in the late 1930s, the Campaign to Suppress Counter-revolutionaries in the People's Republic of China in the early 1950s, or the Campaign to Cleanse Class Ranks during China's Cultural Revolution (1967–8) were launched with the primary goal of striking terror into the hearts of real or imagined enemies, both outside and inside the Party. The very nature of campaigns, as holistic, highly focused periods of mobilization for the instruments of the state to achieve particular goals, frequently conflated different policy imperatives (raising output, pushing through land reform or collectivization, terrorizing marginal or suspect groups) in a concerted drive to achieve results irrespective of cost or regular bureaucratic procedure. Excesses, collateral damage, neglect of routine procedure, and widespread campaign fatigue were the almost inevitable corollaries. In addition, for all the major cases outside Eastern Europe, (the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, and North Korea), the earliest campaigns of terror were indistinguishable from the final stages of war. Sometimes the war was civil, sometimes anti-colonial, sometimes regional, and often some mix of all three.

But in all cases, the massive insecurity of the immediate environment, the absolute need to distinguish friend and sympathizer from counter-revolutionary foe, and the porous boundaries between friend, foe, and fair-weather collaborator both definitively stamped the viciousness of the early campaigns of terror and established a template for later action.

The Security, Social and Political Context(s) of Terror: Militarization, State Building, and Uncertainty

The initial campaigns of terror in the communist world did not happen overnight or out of context: they were the product of a wider environment of ongoing insecurity, brutality, and massive uncertainty. No less a revolutionary personage than Vladimir Ilyich Lenin emphasized the necessity of violence in coming to power and regime consolidation:

> If we are not anarchists, we must admit that the state, that is, coercion, is necessary for the transition from capitalism to socialism. The form of coercion is determined by the degree of development of the given revolutionary class, and also by special circumstances, such as, for example, the legacy of a long and reactionary war and the forms of resistance put up by the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie.[11]

In all the cases in which communist regimes came to power, hefty measures of physical coercion were required. Moreover, they came to power amid widespread militarization of state and society and regional insecurity. The Bolsheviks arose as a result of the collapsing eastern front in the First World War; the Soviet Union brought into existence the Eastern European regimes within a few years of the conclusion of the Second World War, backed by physical intimidation, moral suasion, and the ongoing presence of the Red Army; the Yugoslavian communists originally came together as a partisan resistance against fascism; the Chinese communists benefited enormously from the years of instability engendered by Japanese invasion and by the Sino-Japanese War; North Korea was established in the wake of Japan's defeat with Soviet sponsorship; the anti-colonial wars in Indochina constituted the context in which the Vietnamese and Cambodian revolutions unfolded. Even Cuba, whose island position afforded it a modicum of protection, had an implacably hostile superpower on its doorstep, some 90 miles away. These reasonable worries about basic security, in combination with the difficulty of winning the revolution against clearly visible enemies and then securing it against hostile neighbours, created environments in which successful military campaigns were absolutely necessary, campaigns that came to define the legitimacy of the regime.

Key were the porous boundaries between international war, civil war, and vast hinterlands of uncommitted or suspect individuals. The indigenous communist revolutions in Russia, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Yugoslavia all underwent periods, sometimes very protracted, of vicious civil wars against armed enemies. In many cases the latter in the not-so-distant past had been collaborators, friends, or associates: Zhou Enlai and Chiang Kai-shek served together at Whampoa Academy in revolutionary Guangzhou in the mid-1920s when they were part of the same national revolutionary Guomindang party; Josip Broz Tito had collaborated with the royalist Chetniks; and Hồ Chí Minh with the Vietnamese Nationalists, the Quốc Dân Đảng. Given the combination of wartime fluidity in factional and ideological alignment, the ways in which spies and double and triple agents penetrated the highest ranks of each side, and the sheer difficulty in establishing who was friend or foe, it is no wonder that the process of coming to power and launching the earliest stages of regime consolidation required that sharp boundaries be drawn between those amenable to incorporation in the new revolutionary world and those who, by virtue of class status, service to the old regime, or political alignment were completely beyond the pale. In this context, the vanguard party's merciless suppression of those who still possessed arms, its pre-emptive neutralization of those deemed likely to sympathize with the vanquished regime to resist revolutionary programs, and its paranoia over potential fifth columnists (co-ethnics across hostile borders or those associated with the old regime) all made a crude kind of sense. Communist regimes may well have been paranoid, but much of the time they were in fact surrounded by deeply hostile, often highly militarized enemies. Stalin was deeply, indeed obsessively, concerned about both a resurgent Germany and a hostile Poland at the border. Worries about security were augmented by the fact that many of the young communist regimes—notably in China, Korea, and Vietnam—not only arose under conditions of war, weak and/or colonial governments, and chronic political instability, but also became embroiled in regional wars shortly after coming to power. Involvement in regional war against 'counter-revolutionary' powers made it plausible to call on patriotic sentiment, strengthen the domestic institutions of coercion, and promote much harsher policies towards presumptive internal enemy classes (landlords, rich peasants, merchants, independent intellectuals) than earlier rhetorics of anticolonial struggle and united fronts would have suggested; it also made domestic campaigns involving terror much more acceptable.

There is considerable evidence that the communist regimes in China and Vietnam deliberately used regional tensions and warfare to launch campaigns involving terror against presumptive enemies of the state, supporters of the old regime, and independent social and economic groups which could, in theory, put a damper on the sorts of radical programmes (land reform, collectivization, nationalization of industry and commerce) that the regimes sought to implement.[12] For example, in China, four separate and vicious campaigns were launched in the highly charged environment of the Korean War (1950–3) that involved terror, execution, imprisonment, and intimidation, and the 'smashing' of designated counter-revolutionaries, landlords, corrupt bureaucrats inherited from the Guomindang regime, and independent businessmen. These early campaigns had

the net effect of ridding city and countryside of old elites that could block revolutionary state initiatives, of simultaneously creating a corps of young cadres and activists capable of penetrating the countryside and urban areas, and of inculcating a new set of revolutionary norms and practices in the population at large. Terror had two faces: one of intimidating presumptive 'enemies', another of providing opportunity for the young, ambitious, or simply disgruntled to exercise voice through private denunciation or public accusation in new revolutionary idioms.

Terror as Communicative Theatre

While campaigns utilizing terror were crude and blunt instruments, their heuristic uses—at least initially—were legion. In newly established communist regimes, mainly born of intense periods of militarization and mass violence in wartime, the coercive core of the state lay very close to the surface. Coercion was crucial to regime consolidation, but communist revolutionaries once in power sought to transform their states and their societies fundamentally in accordance with an explicitly Marxist notion of class struggle under the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party. The template for this programme of socialist transformation had been laid down by Stalin: planned economies, crash industrialization, collectivization of agriculture, and deeply entrenched suspicion of foreign forces and influences. Once power had been consolidated, the functions of terror changed. Terror became both a means to resolve practical problems of power, such as factional conflicts in the leadership or ridding the country of enemies. It also proved a useful technique to communicate quickly and effectively regime norms and new revolutionary concepts to the public.

The communication of terror through some form of trial and execution was perhaps the most effective form of political theatre, combining as it did state-sanctioned violence, spectacle, and entertainment. Communist regimes from the Soviet Union to Czechoslovakia to China and Vietnam used theatres of terror to transmit the revolution to the masses, to teach the public new revolutionary norms and vocabularies, and, at least implicitly, to convey the limits of what the revolutionary regime would tolerate. In much of the countryside in China, for example, the public trial and execution of landlords was widely understood by rural audiences to crystallize the moment of no return, after which nothing would ever be the same again.[13] Nothing commands attention quite so much as seeing the once mighty brought low, and the sentencing or execution provided entertainment at least as much as it did instruction about the depravity of the accused. The public theatre of terror was a show put on by the state, and had two major variants. The first and most familiar was the public show trial made famous by Stalin between 1936 and 1938, with later repetitions in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria in the post-war period. The defendants in such show trials were typically the losers in factional struggle, or (in Eastern Europe) those who fell foul of Stalin. Preparation for the trials took place well in advance of the actual event, and the role of guilty defendant

was played out through a lengthy exposition of the individual's moral vileness that was already predetermined and scripted for the occasion. There was little suspense in the proceedings, since guilt was a foregone conclusion. Show trials took place in the formal, enclosed public space of the state's courtroom, and, however ludicrous or incomprehensible the lengthy charges of espionage, wrecking, and other counter-revolutionary activities, the spectacle's form required a public, widely disseminated confession to reify the sanctity of the state and to buttress the authority of the Party leadership in the eyes of the public.

In China and Vietnam, the pattern of terror as communicative theatre and apex of a current campaign was quite different. Here bottom-up, participatory variants of communist revolution entailed a lengthy preparation of the accused for a show that was heavily stage-managed by the state, but significantly took place in open public spaces such as stadiums, public parks, and schoolyards, with substantial popular participation. Before the show, local cadres carefully coached preselected witnesses designed to elicit public sympathy, such as the young, the old, the disabled, and women, to launch highly personalized accusations against the accused. When the event went well, it concluded with the public contrition of the accused, the emotional 'stirring-up' of the crowd, and a crowning culmination of popular support for state's retribution against its enemies, as the accused was led off to the execution ground.[14] Public accusation meetings and struggle sessions against counter-revolutionaries and landlords were first conducted in the early 1950s against those who were clearly identifiable as having belonged to the 'wrong' classes. But the communicative theatre of public accusation continued to provide a repertoire for publicly conducted terror against much less obvious targets, such as 'black elements' and 'rightists' later in the 1950s, and for all and sundry who were accused of being counter-revolutionaries or capitalist roaders in the Cultural Revolution campaigns of 1966–76.

Escalation of Terror: Ideologically Charged Responses to Elite Contention and Social Uncertainty

If campaigns of terror against enemies, resisters, or supporters of the old regime were a comprehensible part of the process of achieving and consolidating power, why did campaigns of terror continue after the revolution was won, often spinning out of control to encompass larger and larger groups, eventually hitting the revolutionary elite itself? There is, alas, no conclusive answer to this question, as in some environments (Poland, East Germany) terror was confined and practices were heavily bureaucratized, while in others (the Soviet Union, China) campaigns of terror were launched from above with ever widening circles of targets long after all obvious political, social, and economic competitors were decisively vanquished. What explains the bizarre twists and turns

that led to the Great Terror in the Soviet Union, or the Cultural Revolution in China, each of which tore apart the established communist party with purges and attacks, and seemed to serve no purpose other than to shore up the most extreme version of the cult of personality for the supreme leader? Power politics in each case certainly came into play: Stalin's Great Purges and Mao's launching of the Cultural Revolution were wrapped up with the deep suspicion that the revolution was not being prosecuted with sufficient vigour, and under these conditions, differences of opinion about appropriate party line were increasingly treated as sins rather than errors. The more that the regular institutions of the party-state were seen to stymie what the Supreme Leader wanted, the greater the imperative to go outside the regular channels of the party-state through either the NKVD or mass movements to prosecute campaigns of accusation and terror in order to reinvigorate the revolution.

Once the communist party invoked paranoia to justify campaigns of terror against counter-revolution and anti-patriotic activity within its own ranks, it was in practice very difficult to call a halt to ever expanding circles of terror, with ever decreasing burdens of proof on the accused in both the party itself and in society at large. With obvious counter-revolutionaries—White officers, Mensheviks, landlords, businessmen, kulaks, and the like—gone, elite discourse nevertheless continued to be conducted in highly charged ideological terms of class struggle. Those in the leadership who argued for a slower pace of socioeconomic transformation could be cast as enemies within; those in society who expressed dubious thoughts or who had a connection with anyone who had dubious thoughts, could be accused of seeking to overthrow the revolution. In the most extreme case of revolutionary paranoia and terror in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge did not even need to establish that particular individuals had committed, articulated, or even thought counter-revolutionary thoughts; by definition, those who as much as lived in cities or wore glasses were immediate targets for terror in its most extreme form.

Conclusion

There were repeated stimuli that pushed communist regimes to pursue campaigns of terror against their citizens, and ultimately against themselves. Part of this was situational: communist parties came to power in wartime contexts rife with competitive militarization, brutality, and the disintegration of even the most basic elements of physical security. Communist parties were in part successful because in many environments they were better organized, better disciplined, and more ruthless than their competitors. Once established, the dictatorship of the proletariat required that all manner of defined enemies be either exterminated or cowed into submission, and the main way in which this was accomplished was through the institution of the bureaucratic campaign. The problem that many communist regimes ran into was that freed of legal or social constraints, the vanguard party, convinced of its access to absolute truth, was also free to make catastrophic errors. Whether it was the pursuit of disastrous policies to

realize economies of scale in grain production or the collateral damage from a campaign against putative internal enemies, there were no institutional restraints on the vanguard party. Social groups that might have blunted excesses were eliminated, fractured, or cowed into silence. In a system in which the vanguard party was only accountable to its own fluctuating notions about how to best pursue the revolution, the methods that had enabled it to come to power and consolidate its rule against real or likely enemies became naturalized as methods of rule that, by vanquishing imaginary and fantasy enemies, would ensure the maintenance of the power of the party and the ultimate victory of socialism.

Notes

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14. Strauss, 'Paternalist Terror'.

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CHAPTER 21

POPULAR OPINION UNDER COMMUNIST REGIMES[1]

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It is generally thought that 'public opinion' does not exist under communist regimes. Their totalitarian nature is understood to exclude the possibility of a public sphere sufficiently independent of the state to allow the expression of a range of opinions, including those critical of the government. According to its foremost theorist, Jürgen Habermas,[2] such a public sphere emerged in France and Britain in the eighteenth century and was integral to the subsequent development of participatory democracy. The totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century (communist and fascist alike) could not tolerate heterodox opinions or criticism and thus had to eliminate any public sphere that may have existed when they took power. Not only did these regimes insist on popular compliance with their dictates, they also made intensive use of propaganda to mould and manipulate the thinking of the masses.[3] Totalitarian mass man lacked agency and therefore opinions. Once the party spoke, the matter was 'no longer an objective issue about which people may have opinions', but 'as real and untouchable an element in their lives as the rules of arithmetic'.[4]

Not surprisingly, given the strong negative value judgement built into the totalitarian model, communist theorists had a different understanding of the relationship between their regimes ('the party') and the masses. They saw the party as involved in a constant dialogue with the masses, having the function of enlightening the people but also, at least in theory, of listening to them. Since the masses were 'backward', it was predictable that the party's policies and intentions would not always be immediately understood, but that just meant that extensive explanatory effort was called for. There were also failures of understanding related not to backwardness but to wrong habits of thought, usually the product of pre-revolutionary 'bourgeois' formation. These, too, had to be corrected by intensive collective persuasion sessions that the Soviets called 'criticism and self-criticism' and the Chinese 'rectification'.

In practice, of course, all communist regimes had security police and a low tolerance for criticism and heterodox opinion. The Soviet regime, in particular, was prone

to interpret any expression of critical opinion as 'anti-Soviet activity', probably part of a 'counter-revolutionary conspiracy', and punish it as a crime. But their security consciousness did not stop them listening to the voices of the masses. On the contrary, knowledge of what was described as 'the popular mood' was considered essential by the party leadership, and—in the absence of other regularly functioning mechanisms of eliciting opinion, such as multi-candidate elections and a free press—the security police had the task of gathering such information.[5] The police got their information by such methods as snooping and opening private letters, but communist regimes also regularly employed other less sinister methods of gathering information about what people were thinking, notably by encouraging citizens to write to the authorities with appeals, complaints, denunciations, and even expressions of opinion about policy issues of the day, and sending summaries up to the party leaders. As long as the Soviet archives were closed, foreign scholars had little detailed knowledge of these practices. Since the 1990s, however, archives have opened in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and even to a limited extent in China that disclose the extent of such information-gathering.[6] We may still have reservations about using the term 'public opinion' with regard to communist societies, but it is now impossible to ignore the fact that something like a popular opinion[7] existed and was systematically monitored by the regimes. It is this monitoring which makes it possible for scholars to study the phenomenon.

That said, the regimes that collected data on 'popular opinion' were at the same time creating and defining the category. Popular opinion so defined was largely reactive, since what interested the regimes most were responses to their own recent initiatives and campaigns. Thus, the opinion reports were likely to contain a great deal of information on topics like collectivization in the Soviet Union or communes in China, while other topics potentially of interest to citizens were left unexplored. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the reports also had a pervasive critical bias. While in the Soviet case the secret police reports on 'the mood of the population' contained a summary of 'positive' opinion as well as 'negative', the negative section was always longer and more interesting. The leaders who scanned these reports—like later historians—surely skipped over the opening paragraphs about the enthusiastic popular welcome to comrade Stalin's latest pronouncement to get to the real heart of the matter: signs of popular discontent, criticism, and disrespect. It has even been argued that this new access to a subaltern world of anti-regime grumbling is skewing the perspective of historians, who are tempted to assume that any pro-Soviet opinion is by definition inauthentic.[8] The point is well taken, and it must therefore be made clear from the outset that the subject of this essay is not the range of popular opinion as it might be known to God, able to look into the hearts of all men, but the popular opinion (primarily but not wholly resistant) that was a category of state attention in communist regimes.

The premise of this essay is that, with regard to popular opinion, the thing and the process whereby it is measured are inseparable. From this it follows that if the measuring techniques are changed, the thing itself changes. This may seem an unnecessarily abstract and theoretical proposition, but in fact it turns out to have interesting practical implications. Starting in the late 1950s, communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the

Soviet Union, and China successively allowed survey research and opinion polling to be practised along with their 'traditional' police-and party-based information-gathering methods. The thing they were studying changed accordingly, or rather, two things that might be called popular opinion now existed simultaneously. What that meant, and whether it involved the creation or reflection of a Habermasian public sphere with its implied teleology towards participatory democracy, will be discussed in the latter portion of this essay.

The Classic Soviet Model

The Bolsheviks took power in 1917 as a minority party, albeit in a context where the majority of citizens evidently approved of socialism.[9] Since the basis of their legitimacy in their own eyes was their status as vanguard of the proletariat (a small minority of the total population), they did not even make a claim to represent the majority. Opposition parties were outlawed, voting rights restricted to 'toilers', and members of the old privileged classes were disenfranchised. As representatives of the most 'progressive' class, the Bolsheviks saw their task as enlightening the 'backward' majority of peasants. The educative mission, of which systematic propaganda was a part but not the whole, was extremely important to them. Conceptually, popular opinion had to be studied not so much to align state policy with popular preferences but to discover and correct the confusions of the backward masses.

Soviet institutional structures—a one-party state, elections which quickly became one-candidate formalities, censorship and state monopoly of the media—were not such as to facilitate transmission of opinion from ruled to rulers. Thus, in order to gather the information on what the population was thinking, it was necessary to use other means. In the pre-war Soviet Union, the major information-gatherers were the secret police, who compiled 'Summaries on popular mood [*Svodki o nastroenii naseleniia*]', based on locally gathered information, at district, regional, and national level for the party leadership. A secondary source, in the social-science-minded 1920s, were field studies conducted by ethnographers and sociologists;[10] and in this early period even secret-police reports sometimes had a sociological cast.[11] The norm, however, was a less intellectually ambitious account of grumbling about wages, prices, working conditions, and the like, compiled by local informants who listened in to conversations at workplaces, markets, railway stations, and other sites of social intercourse. In Leningrad, whose secret-police reports of the 1930s have been carefully analyzed, topics of perpetual complaint included food shortages and elite privileges, but the reports also registered a range of popular opinions on the Stalin cult and a good deal of mockery of propaganda clichés such as Stalin's 'Life has become merrier'.[12]

Vox populi spoke also through the medium of letters by individual citizens to newspapers and various government institutions, including complaints, denunciations, appeals, statements of opinion on public issues, and (in the case of anonymous letters)

abuse by the party leaders.[13] Huge numbers of such letters were sent every year, mostly signed though not always with a genuine signature, and the bureaucracies receiving them were required to forward them to the appropriate authorities, including the procuracy in case of alleged criminal actions. An important function of the denunciation letters was to draw the attention of superior authorities to the malfeasance of local bosses. Soviet newspapers had a separate 'department of letters' whose function was not primarily to publish them—something that happened quite rarely—but to send them on to the appropriate authorities, as well as to summarize their content for the information of the party leaders. Petitions could also be made in person at the office of President Kalinin, head of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, and also at the offices of elected deputies to district and regional soviets.

Popular opinion was regularly solicited in pre-election meetings; and in 1936 the Soviet regime experimented with a new method of information gathering, the 'popular discussion' (*narodnoe obsuzhdenie*) on important national issues, such as the proposed ban on abortion and the draft of the new Constitution.[14] Another experiment was the inclusion of the question 'Are you a [religious] believer?' in the 1937 national population census. This was the only time the question was ever asked in a census, perhaps because of the unwelcome finding that, after twenty years of intensive propaganda for atheism, 57 per cent of adults checked 'Yes'. Popular opinion (as recorded by census-takers) was excited by this unexpected question, speculating that it was perhaps something like a plebiscite insisted upon by the League of Nations—unless, of course, it was a way of identifying believers and punishing them.[15]

As this suggests, the 'conversation of rumors' was lively in the Soviet town and countryside, constituting an often critical commentary on Soviet propaganda. Apocalyptic rumours were rife during collectivization, and rumours of imminent war (both fearful and hopeful of liberation) were a staple throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Even peasants were capable of surprisingly sophisticated Aesopian readings of the Soviet press. Jokes (told not only to friends but in anonymous public settings like queues, and carefully collected by the secret police) were a popular form of commentary on events of the day. When Sergei Kirov, the Leningrad party leader, was assassinated in December 1934, a *chastushka* (topical words sung to a familiar melody) circulated widely: 'They killed Kirov/They will kill Stalin' was one; another changed the second 'they' to 'we'.[16]

Elite opinion was also a concern of the party leaders—in particular, the opinion of the so-called 'creative' intelligentsia, consisting of writers, artists, scholars, and scientists of the capitals.[17] This differed from the monitoring of popular opinion by its intensity and specificity: comments are attributed to named individuals, making the reports feel almost like a gossip column compiled for the entertainment of the political leaders. Every time the regime put out a new policy in the cultural field, reaction was reported to the leaders.[18] The success of various 'signals' from above, including arbitrary interventions by Stalin on behalf of a particular cultural figure, were diligently assessed, along with the growth of the Stalin cult. Though innocent of Habermasian theory, the regime obviously had some concept of a politically attentive public,[19] which could be roughly equated with the intelligentsia. The regime's hope that this public would embrace Soviet

values was partially realized in the 1930s, as a result of a successful alternation of stick and carrot in the early Stalin period. Nevertheless, the Russian intelligentsia did not wholly abandon its traditional role of moral critic of state power. Despite the censorship, successive 'thick' journals[20] grasped the banner of loyal criticism, to intelligentsia acclaim and official uneasiness, and upheld it until the inevitable dismissal of its daring and admired editor.

So far we have focused mainly on the collection of opinion as a regular practice, regardless of political climate. But the Stalinist regime, like the Maoist in China, was marked by waves of high political tension, interspersed by periods of relaxation and apparent retreat. In the pre-war Soviet case, the periods of high tension were collectivization and Cultural Revolution[21] in the early 1930s and the Great Purges of 1936–8. In these periods, specific types of enemy were targeted—kulaks and priests in the collectivization campaign, 'bourgeois specialists', bureaucrats and 'Rightists' in the Cultural Revolution, 'enemies of the people' during the Great Purges—and the population was urged to identify and denounce individuals who fitted the categories. All these campaigns elicited large numbers of denunciations, often settling private scores.[22] The Cultural Revolution, in addition, generated an outburst of spontaneous radical critiques and militant activity against 'Rightist' bureaucrats and 'bourgeois' professors that thoroughly shook up the state bureaucracy as well as the intelligentsia until, after three to four years and not without difficulty, the party leadership called a halt.

During the Second World War, recorded Soviet popular opinion featured the usual grumbling but also considerable patriotic sentiment, expressed in part as indignation at the Allies' slowness in opening a Second Front.[23] People were fearful that the international situation was even worse than they had been told, and remained so after the war, when the opinion reports disclose a very strong sentiment for peace combined with fear of a new war and invasion. A development that worried the Soviet regime and continues to puzzle historians was the wartime rise of popular antisemitism, expressed in the widespread notion that, while Russians were dying at the front, privileged Jews were sitting out the war in evacuation in Tashkent. In the post-war period, this popular antisemitism was taken up, albeit in an ambiguous manner, by the party leadership (probably actually by Stalin himself, as his successors moved quickly to stop it after his death in March 1953), culminating in accusations of murder and treason against a group of (mainly Jewish) Kremlin physicians in the 'Doctors' Plot', announced in January 1953. The announcement was the pretext for the organization of meetings throughout the country in which antisemitic sentiments (but also uneasiness at the abandonment of the regime's long-established anti-antisemitic position) were freely expressed and reported to the centre.[24]

The emergence of antisemitism as (undeclared) state and party policy in the late Stalin period was the background for an interesting exchange between Stalin and several intelligentsia leaders with whom he had off-the-record conversations at this time. Clearly relying on them to circulate what he said on the intelligentsia grapevine, he told them that he was shocked to learn of antisemitic actions and statements by officials and would immediately put a stop to it.[25] This disingenuous ploy suggests not only that Stalin

did not want antisemitism to be part of his public persona but also that he assumed the existence of an attentive Soviet public (*obshchestvennost'*) whose opinion could be either critical or supportive of regime policies.

The Post-War Picture

Our field of inquiry broadens spectacularly after the Second World War, when Soviet-type systems under varying degrees of Soviet tutelage appeared in Eastern Europe and Mao's Communist Party took power in China in 1949.[26] From this point on, the Soviet Union was no longer the single focus of world communism, although its political and institutional influence was strongly felt in all the newly communist countries. All of these regimes had a security police and censorship, restricted contacts with the West, conducted active propaganda, sought to mobilize citizens via campaigns, and restricted other spontaneous forms of expression of popular opinion. In Eastern Europe in the 1950s, the monitoring of popular opinion seems to have followed Soviet models quite closely: party organs and security police reported on the popular mood, as in the USSR,[27] letters to newspapers and authorities were summarized as a guide to popular opinion, and deputies were expected to attend to complaints from individuals in their constituencies.[28]

Whereas scholars of post-war Eastern Europe have often assumed a higher level of popular resistance to communist regimes (based on nationalism and dislike of Soviet 'imperialism') than even in the Soviet Union itself, the opposite is true of China scholars. Mao's 'mass line' postulated a close interactive connection between regime and populace, and Sinologists seem more inclined than Sovietologists ever were to accept this claim.[29] They have also been wary of exaggerating Soviet influence on the institutions of the new Chinese communist state, but recent scholarship nevertheless suggests that in the realm of popular-opinion monitoring, the similarities were quite substantial. As scholars have recently discovered, the security police regularly compiled reports on the mood of the population (called 'social intelligence') that were sent up to the party leaders.[30] In addition, they sometimes reported on elite opinion (with names) just as the Stalin regime had done in the 1930s, perhaps implying a similar awareness of the existence of an attentive and potentially critical public.[31] In the mid-1950s, popular reactions were solicited on the draft of the 1954 Chinese Constitution, an apparent analogue to the Soviet 'popular discussion' of their new Constitution twenty years earlier.[32]

Rumours flourished and were monitored by the authorities in China, as in the Soviet Union, and their content has many similarities, with imminent war, invasion, and future cataclysms prominent in each.[33] In China the presence of hairy demons and talking toads makes the rumours more lively; nevertheless, it is hard to overlook the family resemblance between the Chinese rumour of the 1950s that the Soviet Union had asked for 'the hearts, livers, eyes, testicles and breasts of 20,000 people in order to make atom bombs' and the Soviet rumour of the early 1930s that the state was planning to cut off women's plaits and export them to China.[34]

Public critique was something the Chinese Communist regime sometimes expressly solicited, although, as in the Soviet Union, such solicitation was often followed by an abrupt change of course and the punishment of the most vociferous critics. The classic example on the Chinese side was the Hundred Flowers campaign,[35] when Mao called for criticism of bureaucratic tendencies in the party and exposure of 'contradictions' (that is, elements of conflict) within the society. This elicited a profusion of critical 'big character' posters, as well as various forms of civil unrest, and some have interpreted the campaign as a trap to lure hidden critics into self-exposure, as Mao himself suggested after the event.[36] But occasional excessive response (from the standpoint of the leaders) whenever controls are lifted is virtually systemic in regimes that generally keep the lid on critical opinion firmly closed. Stalin could have told Mao as much, had he cared to remember the debacle of the Soviet Cultural Revolution.

The Chinese Cultural Revolution, launched in 1966, involved an 'unleashing' of young militants under the rubric of 'boldly arous[ing] the masses' against the 'Four Olds': old thought, old culture, old customs, and old habits. In practice this meant targeting intellectuals with 'bourgeois' connections and 'capitalist-roaders' in the leadership and bureaucracy.[37] 'At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution,' one participant recalled, 'the ordinary people were exhilarated by their new right to criticize and even to attack their bosses. The suppressed humiliation that one suffers at the hands of a faceless bureaucracy builds up a resentment that is like the surging tide blocked by a dam.'[38] The speaker was a Chinese Red Guard, but the *ressentiment* expressed is equally familiar in a Soviet context, notably in the periodic eruptions of popular anti-elite feeling called forth successively by the Soviet Cultural Revolution,[39] the Great Purges, and the antisemitic campaign of the late Stalin period.

By the late 1950s, however, the Soviet Union was in a very different place vis-à-vis revolution and *ressentiment* than the PRC, and moreover relations between the two powers had been strained to breaking point. The Soviet Union in the 1950s had been so long embourgeoisé—mindful of the proprieties, respectful of high culture and hierarchy—that its citizens were embarrassed by the shoe-banging Khrushchev, let alone Chinese Red Guards on the rampage. Hence, far from welcoming the Chinese Cultural Revolution as a revolutionary process following the Soviet example,[40] the Soviets took a high-minded stance of disapproval of the crude anti-intellectualism, scapegoating, violence, and disorder on display in China, acknowledging no precedent in Soviet experience. The Chinese, for their part, represented it strongly as part of a *rejection* of Soviet influence, which is how it has generally been understood by Western observers.[41]

Embourgeoisement aside, the Soviet Union after Stalin's death enjoyed a spring-like season known as the Thaw, marked by partial repudiation of Stalinist policies. Mao saw this as a sign of Soviet revisionism, unimpressed by the surprising resurgence of utopian optimism in the Soviet Union that was manifest in Khrushchev's promise of full communism within twenty years and better-than-Western standards of living even sooner. The Soviet Union reopened to the West at this time after twenty years of closed borders, enjoying a brief moment when Soviet youth was both in love with the West and patriotic for Soviet socialism, especially in its post-Stalinist incarnation. The intelligentsia shared

these moods, but also took the opportunity to reassert its old claim to moral authority. *Novyi mir* and other thick journals that followed a reformist line, simultaneously loyal to socialism and challenging to the regime, acquired huge readerships and influence with the educated public. 'Truth-telling' works like Alexander Solzhenitsyn's Gulag novella *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and Vladimir Dudintsev's anti-bureaucratic *Not By Bread Alone* were published in *Novyi mir* to great acclaim, and an attentive public followed (via the grapevine) every detail of the journal's many battles with censorship. 'Public', indeed, seems the right word for the reform-oriented emerging community of avid readers of the thick journals,[42] whose meeting places were not coffee houses but kitchen tables in the new separate apartments of Moscow and Leningrad.[43]

Popular opinion continued to be monitored by the security police and party,[44] but the range of data available to historians widens as a result of the intelligentsia's assiduous memoir-writing about this period, as well as surveys conducted retrospectively in the 1990s that served to reify the memory of a golden age.[45] This, however, is the viewpoint of a particular segment of society—a Habermasian public opinion, if you will—that probably bore little resemblance to the opinions of the rest of the population, which continued to grumble about wages and prices, disliked Khrushchev's foreign jaunts, resented the privileges of the elite, and displayed a range of illiberal attitudes.[46]

The big change on the horizon was Western-style opinion polling, which hit Eastern Europe in the 1960s,[47] the Soviet Union in the 1970s,[48] and China in the 1980s.[49] Poland, one of the least compliant members of the Soviet bloc, was the pioneer there, drawing not only on Western influences but on a Polish sociological tradition going back to the 1920s and revived in the mid-1950s.[50] This was not only a different manner of collecting data on popular opinion—aimed directly at the individual, as if in a spirit of consultation; posing unfamiliar questions that generated new kinds of answers and, in effect, new opinions—but also one informed by a strong orientation towards reform on the part of its sponsors ('liberals' in the political elite) and executants (members of the new, or newly revived, profession of sociology). The acceptability of survey research in the various Soviet-bloc countries waxed and waned, but in Eastern Europe it invariably flourished at times of political crisis, as a form of information-gathering that conveyed strong encouragement of oppositional attitudes.[51] Its implicit purpose was not just to find out about popular opinion but to create the public sphere in which opinions critical of the government could be expressed. When Solidarity ran polls in Poland in 1981 asking whether it should go beyond the role of trade union and act like an (opposition) political party,[52] this was as much an act of political mobilization as a mere registration of opinion.

From the 1960s on, it becomes impossible to talk about popular opinion under communism in the Soviet bloc without reference to the role of the Western press. The broadcasts of foreign 'voices', including Radio Liberty (broadcasting to the Soviet Union), Radio Free Europe (broadcasting to Eastern Europe), Voice of America, and the BBC Overseas Service, found many eager listeners, initially attracted perhaps by their presentation of Western popular culture but also incidentally absorbing an alternative, critical view of Soviet-style institutions. Radio Free Europe even conducted its own surveys

of popular opinion in various Eastern European countries.[53] In the Soviet Union, the impact of foreign broadcasting can be traced not only (as might be expected) on the intelligentsia but also in less elite circles.[54] In China, provinces adjacent to Hongkong and Taiwan had the greatest access to foreign media,[55] but news travelled. The impact of the foreign 'Voices' was not only to give an alternative version of the news but also to magnify, by broadcasting back, whatever dissident notes existed in the society.

Almost equally important was the role of foreign correspondents in Moscow and other capitals in reporting 'dissident' opinion. Initially, the Soviet dissidents were small groups of marginalized intellectuals whose modest challenges to the regime found encouragement and protection from the correspondents. The dissidents often criticized Soviet institutions from a Western liberal-democratic standpoint, and were widely, though unfairly, perceived in their own society as people who had sold out to the other side in the Cold War for Marlboro cigarettes and Johnny Walker scotch. Their domestic unpopularity was compounded when the dissident cause became mixed up with that of Jewish emigration, but in the West their visibility and popularity soared. For most Western correspondents, dissidents were *the* story from the Soviet Union and later from the whole communist bloc. Coverage was highly partisan, with the representation of dissidents and protesters as heroes and martyrs reaching its apex in reporting on the Solidarity movement in Poland in the 1980s and the Tiananmen Square confrontation in Beijing in 1989.[56] A feedback loop brought this back to the countries concerned, outraging governments even as it influenced public opinion. In Eastern Europe, foreign broadcasts have been seen as a key element in the dissident intellectuals' accumulation of 'moral capital', at home as well as abroad, as pioneers of freedom.[57]

The last act of the drama of communist regimes in twentieth-century Europe is often written in terms of the emergence, struggle, and ultimate triumph of 'civil society', a term that in the East European context was used almost synonymously with 'the public sphere'.[58] Western scholars followed this development eagerly and did their best to further it.[59] Poland was the key site of contestation, with the Solidarity battles generating what has been called a 'parallel polis' alongside the formal state.[60] While this application of the concept of civil society has been criticized, both for its normative, teleological character and its presupposition of 'state' and 'society' as mutually exclusive spheres,[61] it is deeply embedded in popular understanding, both in the region and outside, of why communism collapsed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

In China, to be sure, the regime successfully resisted this logic, not only failing to collapse but entering a period of extraordinary economic and international success in the wake of the Tiananmen Square crackdown. But China is not the only problem for the 'civil society' explanation of why communist regimes collapsed. In the Soviet case, popular protest (except in the late-incorporated Baltic states) was much less important in the break-up of the Union than the decision of republican leaders—crucially including the Russian Republic, headed by Boris Eltsin—to opt for separation. Former dissidents were not incorporated in the leadership of successor regimes in Russia, and the autocratic aspects of Vladimir Putin's rule soured many Russia-watchers on the teleology of a post-communist

march to democracy. More of a case for a successful 'civil society' challenge can be made for Eastern Europe, where some former dissidents did play a political role (notably Václav Havel in the Czech Republic). But Stephen Kotkin has argued convincingly that, while the 'triumph of civil society' motif may work for Poland (which '*had* an opposition, which *imagined itself* as civil society'), for all other Eastern European countries, with the possible exception of Hungary, 'the focus on the opposition [as the cause of regime collapse] falls into the realm of fiction.. . . The 1989 revolutions did not happen because of a broad freedom drive' but because of 'Gorbachev's unilateral removal of the Soviet backstop and the inability of East European communist regimes to survive without it'.[62]

For our purposes, the actual existence of a causal relationship is less important than the contemporary perception inside and outside the region that such a relationship existed. At the time, the sense of a Habermasian teleology towards participatory democracy and away from communism in its classic twentieth-century formulations was overwhelming, both for domestic participants and for the westerners whose reporting of critical 'public opinion' in the communist bloc was also an act of creation. The collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe brought both the triumph of that particular kind of teleological thinking and its instant irrelevance. Popular opinion, no doubt, had become public opinion. But in the process, the excitement of collective struggle to widen the public sphere and the gratifying sense of the invincible 'rightness' of the cause, and the public opinion that supported it, had disappeared. In some countries, post-communist public opinion (or does such an opinion deserve to be downgraded to 'popular'?) so lost its bearings as to develop a nostalgia for communism. That brings us to the end of our story—unless China, still officially communist and not yet nostalgic, has some surprises up its sleeve.

Notes

1. Thanks to Steve Smith, Jacob Eyferth, and Tara Zahra for their helpful comments on the draft of this essay.
2. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Berger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989; German edition 1962).
3. See Alex Inkeles, *Popular Opinion in Soviet Russia: A Study in Mass Persuasion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950).
4. Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism*. Part 3 of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 61.
5. The same was true in Nazi Germany, which even used a similar terminology: *Stimmungs berichte* (cf. the Soviet *Svodki o nastroenii* . . .).
6. For a survey of the impact on Soviet scholarship, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Popular Opinion in Russia under Pre-War Stalinism', in Paul Corner, ed., *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 17–32.
7. See Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 4: while the term 'public opinion' is 'by and large applicable only to societies where there exists a plurality of freely and publicly expressed

opinion', there was nevertheless 'an inchoate ground-swell of spontaneous, unorchestrated attitudes beneath the surface of the apparently monolithic unity' whose existence the Nazi regime recognized, 'set[ting] up its own apparatus to test, probe, and keep check on [it]'.

8. Jochen Hellbeck, 'Speaking Out: Languages of Affirmation and Dissent in Stalinist Russia', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, I:1 (2000), 74. It should be noted that the Harvard Interview Project on the Soviet Social System, conducted after the war with refugees from the Soviet Union, disclosed a significantly more positive response to Soviet institutions than the NKVD reports on popular mood might suggest: see Alex Inkeles and Raymond Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 381 and passim.
9. See Oliver H. Radkey, *Russia Goes to the Polls: The Election to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, 1917* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 16–19.
10. On debates between Marxists and others within the field known as 'rural sociology', see Susan Gross Solomon, 'Rural Scholars and the Cultural Revolution', in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978), 129–53. In the mid-1920s the agitprop department of the party Central Committee was a major sponsor of such work, and apparently did not try to censor it.
11. See, for example, an interrogation-based report from the OGPU presented at the XVI Party Congress in 1930 which could almost have been submitted as a scholarly paper on network analysis, discussed in Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Ordzhonikidze's Takeover of Vesenkha: A Case Study of Soviet Bureaucratic Politics', *Soviet Studies*, 37:2 (1985), 161–2.
12. See Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). On surveillance more broadly, see Peter Holquist, '"Information is the Alpha and Omega of our Work": Bolshevik Surveillance in its Pan-European Context', *Journal of Modern History*, 69:3 (1997), and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), ch. 7 ('Conversations and Listeners'), 164–89.
13. For a typology of letters and an analysis of denunciations in the 1930s, see chs. 9 and 11 ('Supplicants and Citizens' and 'Signals from Below') in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 155–81 and 205–39.
14. See Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 178–82.
15. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 204, and Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 189.
16. For rural rumours collected by the state during collectivization, see Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 45–9, 67–9, 75–6, and Lynne Viola, 'The Peasant Nightmare: Visions of Apocalypse in the Soviet Countryside', *Journal of Modern History*, 62:4 (1990), 747–70. For urban rumours, see Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 168–172, 182–6. For popular reactions to Kirov's death, see Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 290–3, and Lesley A. Rimmel, 'Another Kind of Fear: The Kirov Murder and the End of Bread Rationing in Leningrad', *Slavic Review*, 56:3 (1997).
17. The intelligentsia was often divided into 'creative' and 'technical' in Soviet discourse. With regard to the other elite group in Soviet society, party officials, there was no systematic monitoring of opinion before the war, though plenty of snooping on individual party

members. After the war, a new practice developed of holding local party discussions on designated issues of the day and sending in reports of them to the centre.

18. For examples from the 1930s, see Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917–1953* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), Documents 62, 63, 71, 72, 73, 75, 80, 97, 99, 101, 108.
19. They used the term *obshchestvennost'* (as distinct from *obshchestvo*) for this public.
20. From the mid-nineteenth century, 'thick' journals, combining belles-lettres with social commentary, had acted as organizers and creators of public opinion in Russia. In the Soviet context, *Krasnaia nov'* personified the loyal-but-critical 'public' in the 1920s, *Literaturnyi kritik* in the 1930s, and *Novyi mir* in the 1950s.
21. On the Soviet Cultural Revolution, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University press, 1978), and discussion below.
22. On denunciation as a regular Soviet practice, intensified and politicized at times of tension, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation in the 1930s', in Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately, eds., *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern Europe, 1789–1989* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 85–120 (revised version in Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 205–39).
23. On popular opinion during the war, see Timothy Johnston, *Being Soviet: Identity, Rumour, and Everyday Life under Stalin 1939–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
24. This episode of popular ressentiment, together with earlier episodes in the Soviet Cultural Revolution and the Great Purges, is discussed in Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Vengeance and Ressentiment in the Russian Revolution', in 'Forum: "Comparing Revolutions. On Arno Mayer's *The Furies*" ', *French Historical Studies*, 24:4 (Autumn 2001). For an East European example of a similar confluence of popular antisemitism and official policy, see Kevin McDermott, '"A Polyphony of Voices"? Czech Popular Opinion and the Slansky Affair', *Slavic Review*, 67:4 (2008), 849–52.
25. Tikhon Khrennikov, *Tak eto bylo* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1994), 177–9. Konstantin Simonov, *Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniia*, (Moscow: Kniga, 1990) 188–9, 203. Khrennikov was head of the Soviet Composers' Union, Simonov a senior figure in the Writers' Union. It is now sufficiently clear—and fairly quickly became clear to Khrennikov and Simonov after the fact—that these protestations of Stalin's were disingenuous.
26. I will refer to the leading parties in all these states as 'Communist', although their formal names vary.
27. And also in Nazi Germany, another relevant influence, especially for East Germany: see Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 6–10, on Nazi *Stimmungsberichte* (mood reports).
28. These generalizations are culled from the relatively sparse literature on the topic: Marcin Kula, 'Poland: The Silence of Those Deprived of Voice', in Corner, ed., *Popular Opinion*, 156–158; Mark Allinson, *Politics and Popular Opinion in East Germany 1945–68* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 9 and *passim*; McDermott, ' "A Polyphony of Voices"?', 840–65; and Rudolf L Tőkés, 'Murmurs and Whispers: Public Opinion and Legitimacy Crisis in Hungary, 1971–1989', *Carl Beck Papers in Russian & East European Studies*, 1206 (Pittsburgh, PA: Center for Russian & East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 1997), 89–90 (n. 73).
29. On the comparison of Soviet and Chinese political attitudes, see S. A. Smith, 'Talking Toads and Chinless Ghosts: The Politics of "Superstitious" Rumors in the People's Republic of China, 1961–1965', *American Historical Review* (April 2006), 425. Note that

the Cold War influence on pre-1989 Western scholarship on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe surely encouraged negative assessments of communist regimes' popularity with their citizens.

30. See Michael Schoenhals, 'Guest Editor's Introduction', *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, vol. 38, no. 3 (Spring 2007), 3–9, and the documentary publications that follow. Another form of Chinese information gathering on the popular mood were the Internal Reference Materials (*neibu cankao*) (see Smith, 'Talking Toads', 405–27). Published for restricted elite circulation, these have no known Soviet analogue; contrary to Smith's impression when he wrote the article, it appears that they were a separate genre from the security police reports. Thanks for clarification on these points to Steve Smith, Michael Schoenhals, and Daniel Leese.
31. Schoenhals ed., 'Prominent Non-Chinese -(DDP) Members on War with Chiang Kai-Shek, 1962', *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, 38:3 (2007) 54–87.
32. An unelaborated reference to the Chinese discussion is in John Gittings, *The Changing Face of China: From Mao to Market* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 46. On the Soviet discussion of 1936, see above.
33. On Chinese rumours, see Steve Smith, 'Fear and Rumour in the People's Republic of China in the 1950s', *Cultural and Social History*, 5:3 (2008), 269–88; 'Talking Toads', 405–427; 'Local Cadres Confront the Supernatural: The Politics of Holy Water (*Shenshui*) in the PRC, 1949–1966', *The China Quarterly*, 108 (December 2006), 999–1022.
34. Chinese rumor from Smith, 'Fear and Rumour', 276; Soviet rumor from Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 68.
35. 'Let a hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred schools of thought contend' was a slogan revived by Mao in a speech of 2 May 1956. Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: Free Press, 1977), 177.
36. Craig Dietrich, *People's China: A Brief History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 109.
37. Here I am summarizing the characterization in Meisner, *Mao's China*, 313–314. 'Capitalist-roaders' appears to be equivalent to the Soviet pejorative 'Rightist'.
38. Quoted Gittings, *Changing Face*, 81.
39. The relationship between the Soviet and Chinese Cultural Revolutions has been little discussed in the scholarship on the Chinese case, although resemblances are pointed out in Suzanne Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-century China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. 259–77. Sinologists have usually limited Soviet influence to a 'bureaucratic model' influential in the 1950s, treating the alternative radical-mobilizational aspects of Mao's regime as a product of indigenous revolutionary tradition (see Dorothy J. Solinger, ed., *Three Visions of Chinese Socialism*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), despite the existence of apparently similar episodes of radical mobilization in the Soviet case, a view that drew criticism in Andrew G. Walder's essay 'Cultural Revolution Radicalism: Variations on a Stalinist theme', in *New Perspectives on the Cultural Revolution*, ed. William A. Joseph, et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 1991), 41–62. However, Walder, seems unaware of the existence of a Soviet Cultural Revolution, focusing his argument on the Stalinist Great Purges a few years later.
40. By the 1950s the term 'cultural revolution' had been redefined to mean gradual cultural uplifting of the population, and the 'class war' cultural revolution on the early Stalin period all but forgotten. A detailed account of contemporary Soviet reactions is in Elizabeth McGuire, 'China, the Fun-House Mirror: Soviet Reactions to the Chinese Cultural

Revolution, 1966–1969', Berkeley Program for Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper (Spring 2001).

41. Walder, 'Cultural Revolution Radicalism', 42. A rejection of Soviet influence in the 1950s does not necessarily involve repudiation of Soviet lessons on revolutionary technique acquired earlier, either through direct observation (Chen Boda, one of the leaders and ideologists of Chinese Cultural Revolution, was an intimate of Mao's who had been in the Soviet Union during the Soviet Cultural Revolution) or via Comintern publications of the period.
42. On reader response, see Denis Kozlov, 'Naming the Social Evil: The Readers of *Novyi mir* and Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone*, 1956–1959 and Beyond', in Polly Jones, ed., *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: A Social and Cultural History of Reform in the Khrushchev Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 80–98.
43. Under Stalin, as a result of mass migration to the towns and extreme overcrowding, most urban families lived in a single room of a communal apartment. Khrushchev built millions of one-family apartments, thus involuntarily creating the one-family kitchen as a venue for intimate conversations of family and friends.
44. For an excellent overview of sources on popular opinion in the post-war period, see E. Iu. Zubkova, *Poslevoennoe sovetskoe obshchestvo. Politika i povsednevnost', 1945–1953* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1999), 3–17. While police reports on the popular mood of this period remain largely locked away in the KGB archives, many varieties of internal party reports, as well as some perlustration materials, are available.
45. Iu. V. Aksiutin draws heavily on a survey conducted in Moscow 1994–9 in his *Khrushchevskaia ḳottepel'" i obshchestvennye nastroeniia v SSSR v 1953–1964 gg.* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia politicheskaia entsiklopediia, 2004), 14 and passim. On popular opinion in the Khrushchev period, see also Aleksandr Pyzhikov, *Khrushchevskaia ottepel'* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2002), 258–89, and Elena Zubkova, *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957*, trans. and ed. Hugh Ragsdale (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998). The classic work of nostalgic celebration of the Soviet 1960s is Petr Vail' and Aleksandr Genis, *60-e: Mir sovetskogo cheloveka* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1988).
46. See *Sedition: Everyday Resistance in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev and Brezhnev*, ed. Vladimir A. Kozlov, Sheila Fitzpatrick and Sergei V. Mironenko. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), based on data from files of prosecutions for 'anti-Soviet' activity from the State Archives of the Russian Federation.
47. See Walter D. Connor and Zvi Y. Gitelman, *Public Opinion in the European Socialist System* (New York: Praeger, 1977), and William A. Welsh, ed., *Survey Research and Public Attitudes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (New York: Pergamon, 1981).
48. See Vladimir Shlapentokh, *The Politics of Sociology in the Soviet Union* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987).
49. Stanley Rosen, 'Public Opinion and Reform in the People's Republic of China', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 22:2–3 (1989), 159.
50. Welsh, *Survey Research*, 389. On Polish sociology and the birth of the Soviet profession, see Shlapentokh, *Politics of Sociology*, 21.
51. Jaroslaw A. Piekalkiewicz, *Public Opinion Polling in Czechoslovakia, 1968–9: Results and Analysis of Surveys Conducted during the Dubcek Era* (New York: Praeger, 1972); Tőkés, 'Murmurs and Whispers'; David S. Mason, *Public Opinion and Political Change in Poland, 1980–1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
52. See Mason, *Public Opinion*, 117–27.

53. See Henry O. Hart, *Emergent Collective Opinion and Upheaval in East Europe and the Role of Radio Communication: A Further Extension of Basic Models* (Munich: [RFE], 1980), and Tőkés, 'Murmurs and Whispers', 95 (n. 121). In the mid-1950s RFE polls of listeners in Poland found that 55 per cent of respondents said RFE helped them form opinions (Mason, *Public Opinion*, 19).
54. See Fitzpatrick, 'Introduction to the English Edition', *Sedition*, 20–2.
55. Steve Smith ('Toads', 273–4) mentions Radio Taiwan and Voice of America as a major source of rumours in China in the 1950s. See also Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 636.
56. Vogel notes the exhilaration, both of foreign correspondents in Beijing and the students with whom they made contact, during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations: 'Western television views and newspaper readers had so thoroughly identified with the students fighting for democracy that the bloody finale was perceived as a crackdown on "our" students, who stood for what "we" stand for…. In the eyes of Western viewers, heroic young demonstrators were being gunned down by brutal dictators.' Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping*, 634–6.
57. Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1996), 108. Verdery cites Václav Havel and Jan Patočka in Czechoslovakia, Doina Cornea in Romania, Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik in Poland, and Győrgy Konrád and Iván Szelényi in Hungary as gaining renown in this way.
58. For a criticism of this equation, see Craig Calhoun, 'Civil Society and the Public Sphere', *Public Culture*, 5 (1993), 267–80.
59. See, for example, Zbigniew Rau, ed., *The Reemergence of Civil Society in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991).
60. B. Michael Frolic, 'State-Led Civil Society', in Timothy Brook and B. Michael Frolic, eds., *Civil Society in China* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 49. The term 'parallel polis' is used in Václav Havel's 'Power of the Powerless' (written 1978), trans. P. Wilson, in Václav Havel, *Living in Truth*, ed. Jan Vladislav (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 103.
61. Thomas A. Metzger, *The Western Concept of Civil Society in the Context of Chinese History* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1998, n.p. ('Executive summary'); Timothy Brook and B. Michael Frolic, 'The Ambiguous Challenge of Civil Society', in Brook and Frolic, eds., *Civil Society in China*, 10; Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and his TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2010), 4–5.
62. Stephen Kotkin (with a contribution by Jan T. Gross), *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York: The Modern Library, 2009), xiv, xvii.

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CHAPTER 22

COMMUNISM AND ECONOMIC MODERNIZATION

MARK HARRISON

Where communist parties took power, they adopted common economic institutions. These included state ownership of the 'commanding heights' of heavy industry and transport, the amalgamation of small peasant farms into large cooperatives under state supervision (except in Poland), and the suppression of many markets (although fewer in Yugoslavia). Economic management at every level was politicized so that decisions were based on national priorities rather than profit or loss. Because these institutions worked imperfectly, all the countries under communist rule also made attempts at reform. In the European communist countries all such reforms failed.

These economies were termed 'socialist' because the Marxist-Leninist ideology of their rulers adopted the goal of communism, a society of abundance and voluntary sharing, with socialism as the current developmental phase that would precede its attainment. The challenge presented by communism was military and cultural as well as economic, but both military power and cultural appeals were underpinned by economic strength. At one time it was widely believed that communist Russia would soon overtake America in productivity and consumption per head. Particular inefficiencies of the socialist economies were obvious, but many believed that either more ideology or less ideology could fix the defects while retaining the core institutions. Regardless of difficulties, control of economic resources was enough to ensure that communist rulers could confront the West militarily and diplomatically in Europe, Africa, Asia, and South America.

Aims and Objectives

In the years following 1917, the Bolsheviks stole power and property from Russia's nobility and new middle class. After a decade of upheaval and consolidation, civil war

and reconstruction, their dreams became action plans for the economic and military modernization of the Soviet Union. When other countries joined the Soviet Union in a communist club after World War II, they copied these plans initially, adapting them afterwards to the variety of national circumstances.

Judging from their rhetoric, the communists proposed everywhere to reorganize the economy on socially rational or 'planned' lines so as to move society into the era of abundance. In 1959, for example, the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev famously promised to achieve this by 1980. Such goals appeared to be humane, even if the methods used to pursue them often did not.

At the same time it is natural to wonder whether we should take such programmatic aspirations at face value and give them causal significance in explaining what was brought about under communism. More revealing of what really mattered to communist leaders may be the measurable objectives that they set as intermediate goals and the policy instruments and resources that they allocated to them.[1] On that basis, the measurable objective that was most widely shared among communist leaders, having taken power in less developed regions, was 'to catch up and overtake' the economically more advanced countries of the West. In 1931 Stalin formulated this idea memorably as follows:[2]

> One feature of the history of old Russia was the continual beatings she suffered for falling behind, for her backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol Khans. She was beaten by the Turkish beys. She was beaten by the Swedish feudal lords. She was beaten by the Polish and Lithuanian gentry. She was beaten by the British and French capitalists. She was beaten by the Japanese barons. All beat her—for her backwardness: for military backwardness, for cultural backwardness, for political backwardness, for industrial backwardness, for agricultural backwardness. She was beaten because to do so was profitable and could be done with impunity.... That is why we must no longer lag behind.
>
> We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us.

The importance of military motives for communist economic modernization is something that historians have rediscovered. During the post-war period, economists on both sides of the Cold War tended to define the Soviet Union as a 'developmental state' similar to that of post-war Japan. They described a Soviet strategy for economic development driven by benevolent goals of civilian welfare, perhaps distorted by an unduly long time horizon and willingness to impose present sacrifices for the sake of future generations. Military motives, other than purely defensive considerations, were rarely examined in any depth. In contrast, studies of Bolshevik politics and policies in the 1920s based on the Russian archives have advanced new evidence of the weight of military interests and military security in Stalin's key decisions to accelerate industrialization, collectivize peasant farming, and squeeze consumption for the sake of accumulation and defence.[3] Based on related arguments about Soviet leaders' 'revealed preferences', Vladimir Kontorovich and Alexander Wein have argued that the prime objective of communist rule in Russia was military modernization, or to 'catch up and overtake' the

West militarily.[4] In their view, economic modernization was just a means to military competition.

Beliefs

Stalin and other communist leaders believed that the decisive factor in the world was power, and that power was ultimately the power to dominate and coerce by superior force rather than the power to persuade or attract by superior example or to engage cooperatively. They defined international society by its distribution of power, and they saw the opportunity for Russia as more to contend for domination than to cooperate through exchange. They did not rule out trade, but saw it as a channel for redistributing a fixed sum of values between winners and losers, rather than a means of augmenting values from which all could gain. To dominate meant to grow, modernize the economy and the armed forces, become economically more capable than others, and translate some of the incremental economic capacity into new military power.

This view of international society was complemented by a set of simplified beliefs about domestic economics and politics. Stalin educated himself and others in the doctrine that production, not market competition or exchange, is the engine of growth. When he looked at the standards of modernity set by the economically more advanced countries of Western Europe and North America, what attracted his attention was tons of coal, steel, and cement, numbers of lathes, and megawatts of electrical power. He concluded that if only Russia could produce as much per head of its population of coal, steel, and other supplies as Germany or America, then Russia would be as modern and as powerful as its rivals. Even under Brezhnev and Gorbachev there remained recognizable traces of Stalin's view that we are stronger when we make more things.

There were political and military implications. Stalin, the little Stalins that took power in other communist countries, and their successors believed that they could not promote these intermediate goals without confiscating property, centralizing economic resources in the hands of the state, and directing and controlling the efforts of the population by decree. They accepted that the mobilization of the economy towards state goals would inevitably create layers of people who were either embittered because they had lost their family property or social status, or unwilling because they placed private aspirations above those of the state. 'We have internal enemies. We have external enemies,' Stalin declared. 'This, comrades, must not be forgotten for a single moment.'[5] Communist leaders' experience of two world wars told them that, in modern warfare, the ability to maintain and supply massive armies continuously in the field was decisive. Their expectations did not change significantly in the atomic era, partly because they evolved ways of thinking about how to fight and win even on a nuclear battlefield, and partly because the likely suddenness of a nuclear onset shifted the emphasis to permanent war readiness. This, in turn, depended on the 'stability of the rear', a code phrase for a calm and obedient population continuously providing military and food supplies and logistical services to the armed forces.[6]

Everywhere, communists in power found utility in identifying foreign enemies and encouraging a permanent war atmosphere. In this context they could mobilize the economy and build the large armed forces that would enable them to manage tension while avoiding actual warfare (at least with the principal adversary, which they identified as the United States). They could also build a police state, while stigmatizing opposition and resistance as the influence of foreign sponsors operating under a domestic cover.

The security agencies watched the mood of the masses, and the communist authorities learned not to push too hard. This restraint applied first of all to the urban workers; in the 1930s, at moments when local signals of discontent began to rise, Stalin was willing if necessary to hold resources back from his pet projects and distribute them to the towns where they were needed to allay the threat of strikes or demonstrations. He gave less consideration to the peasant farmers, and accepted the deaths of millions from hunger in the famine of 1932–3 that ended the first Soviet five-year plan.

In Eastern Europe most communists took more care, and in Poland and Yugoslavia they backtracked from early attempts at collectivization rather than face down peasant resistance. But the loyalty of the general population remained at risk, and was always under pressure from both inside and outside. The inside factor was the relentless pressure from government goals for 'socialist construction'. The outside factor was the appeal of personal freedom and consumer sovereignty from the camp of the adversary.

Rise and Fall

The great test of Stalin's model of modernization came in World War II. In twentieth-century warfare the mass production of things such as guns, planes, and tanks and their delivery to the front line turned out to be a decisive factor. In World War II Soviet industry outproduced Germany and enabled the Red Army to outfight the Wehrmacht. The Soviet rear remained stable, meaning that propensities to disloyalty were kept within tolerable limits and food was delivered to the Red Army and the war factories even when millions were starving to death.[7]

The victory of 1945 projected the Soviet Union onto the world stage. In the late 1940s the Soviet economic system became a model for development of the economies of the Soviet-dominated sphere in Eastern Europe and then for China. But the years of undisputed Soviet hegemony were brief. First Yugoslavia, then China and Albania, and later Romania broke away to follow their own preferred routes to modernity.

All of these countries followed Stalin in benchmarking themselves on Western productivity, Western living standards, and world market prices and costs. How did Stalin's goal 'to catch up and overtake' the economically more advanced countries hold up across the twentieth century? In 1931, when the capitalist world was mired in the Great Depression, 'to catch up and overtake' may have seemed realistic. Stalin had no idea that the Great Depression would inaugurate the most technologically dynamic decade of American economic history.[8] While the military, industrial, and consumer technologies

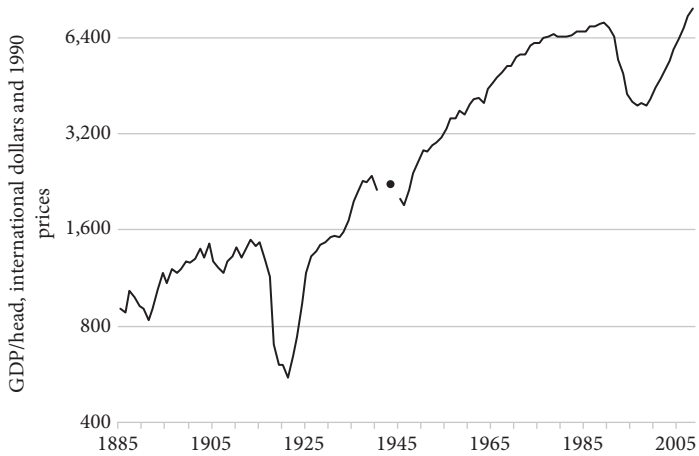


FIGURE 22.1 Real national income per head, Russia and USSR, from 1885 to 2008.

Note: All figures are measured in international dollars and 1990 prices.
Source: Andrei Markevich and Mark Harrison, 'Great War, Civil War, and Recovery: Russia's National Income, 1913 to 1928', *Journal of Economic History*, 71, no. 3 (2011), 693.

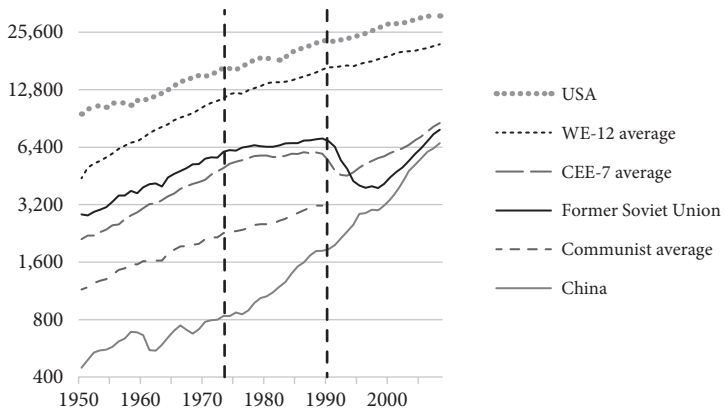


FIGURE 22.2 Real national income per head: selected countries and regions from 1950 to 2008, at 1990 prices and international dollars.

Note: All figures are measured in international dollars and 1990 prices. The two vertical lines are drawn at 1974 and 1990. With a logarithmic vertical axis, per cent gaps are proportional to vertical distance and per cent growth rates are proportional to slopes. The Western European twelve are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The Central and Eastern Europe seven are Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia. The 'communist average' covers the former Soviet Union, China, the CEE-7, and North Korea from 1950 to 1989.
Source: Data by Angus Maddison at <www.ggdc.net/maddison>.

of the West provided the target that the European communist regimes strained after, this target receded continuously over the rest of the century.

Figures 22.1 and 22.2 summarize the bare facts of national economic development, measured by real national income per head under communist rule. National income is

one way among many of measuring progress. It tells us something about the potential of a society to produce social welfare. National income does not tell us whether a society's potential is efficiently utilized, how much has been diverted into military adventures or vanity projects, or how fairly the results are distributed. Thus, actual welfare and potential welfare may diverge. Still, we can be fairly confident that people live better and longer when average incomes are $4,000 per head per year than when they are $400—the bare minimum that, measured in the 'international' prices of 1990, Angus Maddison considered would just sustain human life over the twenty-five-year average span typical of traditional societies.[9]

In Figure 22.1 we see the growth and vicissitudes of the first socialist economy, that of the Soviet Union. In 1913 the Russian empire was the poorest of the great powers. Average incomes were between three and four times a subsistence minimum, and were similar to those prevailing in much of Eastern Europe. World War I was damaging, but a greater catastrophe followed in the Russian Civil War, which reduced the economy to ruins and led to a devastating famine in 1921. After the war came recovery. Under Stalin's five-year plans the Soviet economy was struck by further shocks. Some were self-inflicted: the collectivization of agriculture, launched at the end of 1929, stripped the countryside of food and led to another famine in which millions died. Stalin had a million more executed in the Great Terror of 1937 to 1938. This pattern was repeated thirty years later on a larger scale by China's Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution under Mao Zedong. In the Soviet case, rearmament and World War II did further damage. During each of these periods the economy reeled but did not collapse; afterwards it recovered, and went on to record aggregate growth.

After World War II the Soviet Union was joined by other states under communist rule. All of these countries were relatively poor, but there were significant differences among them. Czechoslovakia was a relatively prosperous middle-income country, followed by East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Albania. Lagging far behind even Albania, China was one of the poorest countries in the world with an economy barely above Maddison's 400-dollar minimum.

Figure 22.2 summarizes communist economic developments from 1950 against the standards of the more advanced countries. It is useful to divide the post-war period into three phases. In the first phase, which ran from 1950 to 1973, the major regions under communism more than doubled their average incomes. Both the Soviet Union and the East European countries on average somewhat caught up on the United States; the percentages are shown in Table 22.1. But the Western European market economies were also growing rapidly, so that the gap between Eastern and Western Europe widened.

A second phase began after 1973. Economic growth slowed down across Europe, but, the deceleration was more pronounced in the communist economies, which began to fall behind America. The lag behind Western Europe lengthened further. At the same time, in contrast, the Chinese economy accelerated and began to register relative improvement for the first time.

This contrast became sharper still in the third phase, which began around 1990. The European countries threw off communist rule and went through a period of deep economic depression. In China, Communist Party rule remained intact and growth

Table 22.1 'Overtake and outstrip the advanced countries economically': real national income per head of selected communist countries and regions in selected years, per cent of market-economy countries and regions

	1950–4	1970–4	1983–7	2003–7
Soviet Union, per cent of:				
USA	28.8	36.6	33.1	…
Western European 12	57.1	51.7	46.3	…
Central and Eastern European 7, per cent of:				
USA	22.0	30.1	28.7	…
Western European 12	43.5	42.5	40.2	…
China, per cent of:				
USA	5.1	5.1	7.3	18.4
Western European 12	10.0	7.2	10.2	26.7

Note: Figures given are five-year averages. All figures are measured in international dollars and 1990 prices. The West European twelve are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The Central and Eastern Europe seven are Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia.
Source: Data by Angus Maddison at <www.ggdc.net/maddison>.

quickened further. By 2008 these contrasting fortunes had led the three regions (China, the former Soviet Union, and Central and Eastern Europe) to a quite similar level. At the same time new gaps emerged, not visible in the figures shown, between the richer countries of Central Europe and some parts of the former Soviet Union; in 2008, for example, the citizens of Tadjikistan lived no better than Chinese people in the 1980s.

Did communism accelerate economic development where it took root? It is not easy to isolate the influence of communism, because communism was more likely to take hold in societies that were already poor and damaged by warfare and civil conflict. The story of Western Europe after 1945 was that initial conditions did not have a lasting effect. Countries with a lower starting point for average incomes, such as Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, grew more quickly thereafter, and so moved gradually towards the level of the richer countries, and this was little affected by previous experience of war and civil conflict.

In this context a simple test is informative. Using data for sixteen Western European countries, Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo show that each 10-percentage-point shortfall in a country's income level relative to the United States in 1950 added nearly one half of a percentage point to its annual growth rate up to 1973. When they add data for eight East European countries, they find the relationship unchanged, but with the difference that the underlying annual growth rate of East European incomes was 1.3 percentage points lower than in Western Europe.[10] In short, when communist economies grew faster than others, it was because they were on average poorer and could exploit more opportunities to catch up. Despite this they grew slower on average than they should have, and this is most likely because they were communist.

In some places, the Cold War threw up 'natural experiments' where the Iron Curtain fell accidentally across previously integrated, ethnolinguistically homogeneous regions. Table 22.2 shows three examples: East and West Germany, Finland and Estonia, and North and South Korea. None of these pairs is perfectly controlled. Finland and Estonia were distinct provinces of the Russian empire before communism, with Estonia the poorer of the two. Korea and Germany were previously unified countries; North Korea was somewhat richer than the South; East Germany was at a level similar to the West. Then, these pairs had widely differing experiences of war and post-war occupation. But the evidence of Western Europe is that the economic consequences of World War II did not persist. In Korea the North lost its initial advantage under communist rule and eventually went into absolute decline. In Estonia and East Germany a lag emerged or persisted and then deepened.

The evidence of China is in striking contrast. In 1950 the average Chinese citizen lived on a bare subsistence income, around one fifth of the global income average and, if born in that year, could expect to live for forty years. In 2008 Chinese incomes had risen to

Table 22.2 Three regions divided by the Cold War: real national income per head, selected years

	1936	1950	1973	1990	2008
West Germany	4,570	4,280	13,147	18,691	…
East Germany	4,781	2,796	7,695	5,101	…
Per cent of West	105%	65%	59%	27%	…
Finland	3,729	4,253	11,085	16,866	24,344
Estonia*	…	…	8,657	10,820	19,951
Per cent of Finland	…	…	78%	64%	82%
South Korea	1,437	854	2,824	8,704	19,614
North Korea**	…	854	2,824	2,841	1,122
Per cent of South	…	100%	100%	33%	6%

* Timo Myllyntaus, 'Standard of living in Estonia and Finland in the 1930s', in Proceedings of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, 41, no. 3 (1992), 184–91, compared nominal wages, food prices, and the diffusion of consumer durables in Finland and Estonia between the wars. Without endorsing any particular figure, he concluded that 'at the end of the interwar period, the level of real earnings per capita was higher in Finland than in Estonia. The difference was then not so huge as it is nowadays [c.1990], but presumably it was so great that contemporaries could not avoid noticing it.'

** Angus Maddison, The World Economy, 208–9, noted that 'In 1940 North Korean GDP per capita was nearly 50 per cent higher than in the South…so it seems reasonable to suppose that 1950 North Korean per capita GDP was at least as high…I have assumed that per capita GDP was the same in the North as in the South from 1950 to 1973, with no progress to 1991. Thereafter, North Korea stopped receiving Soviet aid, and its per capita income has fallen a great deal.'

Note: All figures are measured in international dollars and 1990 prices.

Sources: Data by Angus Maddison at <www.ggdc.net/maddison>, except Germany, East and West, within 1990 frontiers from Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective* (Paris: OECD), 178.

80 per cent of a much higher global average, and life expectancy had risen to more than seventy years. (By comparison, the life expectancy of Russian males peaked at sixty-five in the mid-1960s and then declined.) At this still modest income level China's size, with one fifth of the world's population, enabled it to become a regional military, naval, and nuclear power. Whatever China's future holds, its recent past is remarkable.

Institutions

Of the common features of the communist economies, most important was the politicization of economic life. The state monopolized the industrial and residential capital stocks, the channels of business and private communications, and news and entertainment media, the networks of transport, trade, and distribution, and health and educational facilities. The ruling party's monopoly of power was institutionalized by party structures that paralleled those of the state and the economy, so that party cells became the eyes, ears, and mouthpieces of the party centre in every workshop, office, building site, and town hall. The authority of higher levels over those below was enforced behind the scenes by a vigilant internal security agency. All decisions were made in secret and communicated to the public, if at all, only after the event.

In the economy, the state became the dominant purchaser of output and channelled a large part of it towards government-approved ('planned') projects of economic and military modernization. The rest it released to the retail market, where households could use their money wages and other revenues to compete (or stand in line) for scarce consumer goods and services. Usually the state largely monopolized agricultural land. Even where it did not, it controlled or supervised agricultural markets and the disposition of the farmers' food surpluses to the government and households. In addition the state either monopolized labour or strictly controlled the 'outside options' of workers. Two institutions symbolized this above all: the closing of national borders, even with friendly socialist neighbours, and, within the borders, the widespread use of forced labour to punish disloyalty.

Some of this is measurable, although not perfectly. In Table 22.3 the first two columns report official estimates of the speed and extent to which the economy was 'socialized' in different countries after World War II. The socialization of agricultural land shows how much land was taken out of the hands of the existing peasant farmers and brought under the management of state or 'collective' enterprises. (State farms paid the workers a wage; collective farms paid a dividend of the residual income after the state had taken its share.) In most countries (including China, not shown in the table), land was quickly seized after the communist takeover, and socialization was fairly complete by 1960. Notable exceptions were Poland and Yugoslavia, where the regime backed off in the face of peasant resistance in the early 1950s.

Differences in the socialization of land ownership did not prevent the state from monopolizing distribution. Even where farming remained in private hands, most products passed through the hands of the state before reaching the final consumer. The third

Table 22.3 Degrees of socialization: selected countries, 1953 and 1960, and per cent.

	Per cent of agricultural land in hands of state and collective farms		Per cent of national income produced by state and collective enterprises
	1953	1960	1960
Soviet Union	94	97	100
Bulgaria	56	91	100
Czechoslovakia	54	87	99
Hungary	39	77	91
Albania	13	85	88
East Germany	5	90	85
Romania	21	84	83
Yugoslavia	37	10	73
Poland	19	13	63

Sources: Brus, 'Institutional change', 9, 80, 83, except USSR from TsSU SSSR, Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1960 godu. Statisticheskii ezhegodnik (Gosstatizdat: Moscow, 1960), 82, and Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR. 1922–72. Iubileinyi statisticheskii ezhegodnik (Statistika: Moscow, 1972), 240. China is not shown but, according to Carl Riskin, China's Political Economy: The Quest for Development since 1949 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 86, at the end of 1953, 39 per cent of Chinese peasant households were enlisted in mutual aid teams, and 99 per cent in rural people's communes by the end of 1958.

column of Table 22.3 shows official estimates of the proportion of output in different countries that could be attributed to the 'socialist' sector in 1960. These ranged from just under two thirds in Poland to 100 per cent in the Soviet Union and its loyal follower Bulgaria.

Table 22.3 shows another side of the communist economic system: its propensity to overstate.[11] All the figures for the socialization of agricultural land are inflated by including the allotments that collective farms set aside for the farmers' personal use; income in kind from these allotments helped to make up the family subsistence of farmers, and off-farm sales also contributed significantly to the food available to urban consumers. In other words the table misleads by crediting the socialist sector with both the land that was farmed privately and the contribution of private farming to total output.

Without exception, all the communist-ruled economies began by adopting a similar Stalinist mould of directive planning and resource mobilization. But the system of politicized decisions and bureaucratic allocations continually gave rise to dissatisfaction, which was felt just as keenly by officials and managers as by ordinary citizens.

The root cause of this dissatisfaction was the interposition of the government between producer and consumer. The government procured the products of the state-owned (or peasant) producers at fixed prices and passed them on to the consumers. The consumers included the industrial and military users of industrial equipment and materials, which the state employed to work towards the objectives of the ruling party, as well as the privately motivated household consumers. The government set out to aggregate the expected needs of all the consumers, and to issue contracts to the producers to meet

the sum of these requirements. When the government fixed prices it also distributed consumer and producer surpluses (or deficits) accidentally across the economy, and this created natural incentives to vary production and consumption which the government then had to neutralize or override in order to enforce the distribution that matched its own preferences. To achieve this, the government had to commit to confiscate the profits and make up the losses of the plants and projects in the economy.[12] As a result, no factory was closed and no worker was laid off because an activity was badly managed, and no producer felt the compulsions that a competitive market provides to exert effort, economize on resources, and serve the final consumer efficiently.

Not surprisingly, these arrangements suffered in any comparison with market economies, where consumers and producers find each other competitively, interact directly in a decentralized way, and bear the consequences of their own decisions. Various defects quickly became widespread. Producers served the quantitative imperatives of the plan, not the qualitative needs of the consumer. To work around the plan, they engaged in ingenious simulations and frauds. To limit dependence on unreliable outsiders, ministers and managers encouraged the sourcing of supplies locally, or in-house, or on the farm; if the choice was make-or-buy, 'make' beat 'buy' every time. Similar incentives inhibited inter-provincial and international trade, even among socialist neighbours. Never slow to make a virtue out of necessity, communist rulers such as North Korea's Kim Il-sung worked out elaborate ideologies of self-reliance.

These inefficiencies were costly. The costs were more manageable when the core task of socialist modernization was to copy and transplant existing technologies for the mass production of standardized goods. The costs multiplied as mass production gave way to flexible systems (sometimes called mass customization), and became profound with the information revolution and the rise of the services-based economy. The rulers' legitimacy suffered as the project of catching up and overtaking the more advanced countries economically looked more and more hopeless.

Substandard economic growth did not, however, prevent the Soviet Union from building strategic military parity with the United States. Calamitous economic decisions did not cause Stalin, Mao, Castro, or Kim Il-sung to give up power. This lends support to the view that the revealed preference of communist rulers was to place internal and external security above economic modernization.

Reforms

In the perspective of reform-minded communists, economic reforms were intended to address two gaps. First was the gap between socialist and capitalist achievements, which was failing to close. Second was the gap between the actual achievements and true potential of the socialist economy, which was thought to be widening. Because the second gap was intrinsically unknowable, it was generally measured by the first. The result was that, even though communist leaders after Stalin tended to have a more technocratic outlook,

and were more sceptical of the scope for political mobilization, they believed to the end that, if only they could get the institutions right, they could bring about a new great leap forward in the economy.

When a country is far from the technological frontier, its growth is aided by institutions that implement technologies developed elsewhere. Large gains may be realized simply by moving workers from the countryside to factories and towns. As the economy moves towards the frontier, however, the emphasis must shift gradually away from implementation to autonomous innovation, which can be fostered by opening product markets to more stringent competition and raising the quality of education, for example.[13] As the frontier recedes, and because successive general-purpose technologies impose different institutional requirements, institutional adaptation must be continuous. In turn, this process continually disrupts established interests, throwing up the risk that at some point they may succeed in halting the process of reform, causing economic growth to falter.

The core issue of socialist economic reform was the possibility of nesting the advantages of decentralized markets within the structures of socialist state regulation. It was sometimes thought that centralized planning had worked well in the early years of so-called extensive growth, and needed reform only after industrial modernization. Public discussion of the need for reform waited for the death of Stalin (in 1953) and a new generation of more free-thinking economists. The Russian archives have shown, however, that the need for reform became obvious to insiders when the first Soviet five-year plan was still under way. As early as 1931 Stalin's industry chief Sergo Ordzhonikidze had become a keen advocate of decentralizing intra-industry transactions to plant managers and letting them keep profits and bear losses.[14] He was opposed from above and below. In the economy, industrial officials hoarded supplies and exaggerated demands; in other words, they continued to play the bureaucratic game, not the market game. In the Kremlin, Stalin and Viacheslav Molotov, chair of the Council of People's Commissars, did not wish to give up detailed oversight of the allocation of resources. At this time there was no reform.

Because this did not solve any problems, the issue of reform remained on the table in the post-war period. There were many variants, but a shared theme was the need to replace physical controls on producers by financial controls, making producers responsible for profits and losses, increasing the influence of consumers, and so motivating the main actors in the economy towards greater efficiency.

Underlying reformist proposals was the idea of replacing the Stalinist model, directed from the centre by a totalitarian dictator, with one that shared power more widely amongst a limited number of stakeholders, still within the overall framework of a one-party state. In the reform model the government would control the allocation of resources in very broad terms such as overall public investment and the growth of output, leaving room for other stakeholders, such as experts, managers, work teams, and collectives, and regional and municipal authorities, to fill in the rest according to their own knowledge and aspirations. At the same time the stakeholders would not be equal. The government would remain the senior stakeholder. The Communist Party would still

have the right to regulate the conduct of all stakeholders and would retain the power, if necessary, to confiscate any junior stake.

The first such reform experiment, and one of the most durable, took place in Yugoslavia in 1948. A multi-ethnic state, Yugoslavia pioneered national power-sharing among the federal republics, and market socialism without detailed planning from the centre. The basic unit of the Yugoslav economy became the 'self-managed' firm under a party-guided workers' council.

Because Stalin rejected this innovation the immediate result was a schism within the communist camp, but after Stalin's death other countries began to move in the Yugoslav direction. In 1950s Poland and Hungary, the main thrust of reform was towards power-sharing in the state between political and expert councils, national and local interests, the representatives of industrial and social organizations, and so on. Such designs commonly drew a link from power-sharing in the government to power-sharing in the economy between workers and managers through workplace councils, with the socialist enterprise becoming the basic unit of non-government stakeholding. Notably, power-sharing on these lines was often relabelled as 'socialist democracy'. In Poland and Hungary such ideas were stamped out after the uprisings of 1956. The Czechoslovak reform movement of 1968 revived it briefly, but this too ended in Soviet military intervention and repression.

In other countries and periods a more top-down or technocratic concept of stakeholding proved acceptable. Under Nikita Khrushchev between 1957 and 1965 the Soviet Union experimented with devolution of some central decisions to the regional level, but the experiment was poorly designed, met with resistance, and was then reversed. Other reforms implemented first in East Germany and then copied in the Soviet Union put greater emphasis on new functions of the socialist enterprise. Power-sharing would extend to managers—but not to workers' councils, however guided by the party. One aim of enhancing the prerogatives of managers in relation to the workforce was to break up the pooling of risks and rewards within the enterprise, which discouraged innovation and exceptional effort. Managers would be motivated to boost profitability by sacking shirkers rather than to boost output by hiring additional labour. Workers would be motivated to work harder by rewards rising with productivity.

While some aspects of socialist economic reform were clearly designed to mimic the discipline of a competitive market, the legacy of the totalitarian model was unfavourable to this. One aspect of this legacy was an industrial structure dominated by relatively small numbers of large, specialized state-owned enterprises that faced little competition and, even in the presence of competition, would have been 'too big to fail'. Adding to this, socialist technocrats of the 1950s emphasized the failure of the socialist economy to produce diversified multi-divisional corporations with the large scale and scope to compete on world markets against leading American and European firms. First Poland and East Germany, and then the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary sponsored the merger of state-owned multi-plant combines to fill this gap. Reformers in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in Hungary in the 1980s recognized that giant state-owned and politically connected corporations would seriously undermine the competitive design of a decentralized socialist market economy.

The country that went furthest towards admitting new stakeholders into the socialist economy was China. A first step was the emergence of 'regionally decentralized authoritarianism' in Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward.[15] It coincided with—and formally resembled—the Soviet regional decentralization of 1957, but proved more durable and effective. Beyond the political reasons, China's thirty provinces, with average populations of 20 million people at that time, were larger, more diversified, and more self-sufficient than the Soviet Union's 150 provinces, averaging little more than 1 million each. In the first year of the Great Leap Forward, Beijing handed more than half of its budget revenues down to the provinces.[16] While Mao remained the dictator, and the Communist Party retained central control of local appointment, provincial officials were set to compete against each other for the economic success of their regions. In due course regional decentralization helped to produce a capacity for institutional innovation, because provinces began to compete in trying out innovative reforms.

Following Mao's death in 1976, wider reforms were launched under the 'four modernizations' (of agriculture, industry, science, and defence), with a transition from collective agriculture back to family farming under the 'household responsibility system'. The reform process deepened in the 1980s with the expansion of locally owned 'township and village enterprises' in the 1980s, and in the 1990s with sweeping privatization of state-owned industry. While maintaining currency and capital controls, China also became more integrated into global trade and financial markets than any other communist-ruled country.

This story suggests that, while still far from the world's technological frontier, China is the only communist-ruled country to have found a consistent path of sustained reform and to have developed a capacity for institutional innovation.

Other Outcomes

The overall patterns arising from communist economic modernization in Europe can be summarized as follows. The economy was kept in a state of permanent mobilization, which meant that output and employment were pushed above the equilibrium level of a market economy. Participation rates for women in every age group were higher than in most market economies, and this was particularly true of women past childbearing age. Continuous full employment was not an unmixed blessing because there was no 'creative destruction' of loss-making activities.

Resources available for household consumption were squeezed because the communist-ruled economies typically saved between one-quarter and one-third of their national income each year—a much higher rate than in most market economies. They also allocated between one-third and one-half of investment to building industrial facilities; again this proportion was much higher than in most market economies. A much smaller proportion of industrial capacity was devoted to consumer

goods, the rest being set aside for producing industrial materials, equipment, and armaments.

When communist governments talked about 'building socialism' they meant it literally. They gave priority and resources to capital projects and infrastructure: new power stations, metallurgical and engineering factories, railways and canals, residential micro-regions, automotive technologies, and space satellites. Industrialization and urbanization were to a considerable extent the same: today, land under industrial use accounts for 32 and 44 per cent of the built-up areas of Moscow and St Petersburg respectively, and around 25 per cent of large cities in Eastern Europe and China, compared with 4 to 10 per cent for big cities in market economies.[17] These industrial cities symbolized the new socialist modernity. At the same time the productivity of these investments was generally lower than might be expected of the same resources in a market economy. Much was wasted in the form of projects that were finished late or never, transport links that turned out not to be needed, and prestige ventures that contributed only to the vanity of their leaders.

The communist-ruled economies were heavily militarized. The burden of a large military establishment and extensive military industries on the economy was always hard to capture precisely, not least because it was secret. The Soviet state budget for 1980 admitted to 17.1 billion rubles of military spending, or less than 4 per cent of the national material product; after the collapse of the Soviet state, the true figure was estimated retrospectively at 48.9 billion rubles, or more than 10 per cent. Authoritative Western estimates gave figures that were twice that.[18] In fact, the various channels of funding for the military budget had been hidden from oversight for so long that even the budgetary authorities had no idea of the true figure.[19]

Increases in production relied upon increases in capital and labour more than on technological improvement or efficient reorganization. Production drew freely on the resources of natural environment. In 1985, for example, sulphur oxide emissions per head of the population jumped by an order of magnitude as the observer crossed the line from capitalist to communist Europe, although output per head was much lower on the communist side.[20] Measures of environmental quality were censored and the voice of concerned citizens was suppressed.

Many people gained from Soviet-type modernization. The government invested heavily in science, technology, education, and health. It directly employed and promoted millions of people. Government officials, workers in important factories, residents of important towns, and their families generally had privileged access to goods and services, including to notionally public facilities in education and health care.

Outside the circle of privilege, consumers had to stand in line. Losses arising from waiting time and forced substitution substantially diminished the real worth of goods nominally available. At different times almost anything could be in short supply, from housing and automobiles to sausages and sanitary towels. Communism in the European style appeared to offer the dream of modernized consumption, but without consumer sovereignty. In practice, consumers were continually threatened with relapse into the acute shortages and rationing of communism's darkest years.

The China Deal

With the important exception of China, the experience of reform communism was unsuccessful. The starting point was dissatisfaction with the results of the Stalinist command economy, in which both the party and the people gradually lost confidence. Officially sanctioned reforms were supposed to be the solution. In practice, power-sharing and the delegation of authority to managers had unintended consequences. They were designed to put more pressure on managers and workers to exert effort, but this often led to unrest which immediately switched the traffic lights to red. Other unintended consequences included unpredictable changes in the pattern of demand and the distribution of income, which also led to dissatisfaction. Except in China, where the leaders managed the discontent and persisted with reforms, ruling parties tended to grab power back from other potential stakeholders and reverse the reforms, to the detriment of their own credibility. The result was a progressive loss of faith in the capacity of the government to innovate solutions, which came on top of the original loss of faith in the traditional model.

A by-product was increased toleration of sideline economic activity, including the resort to unofficial markets to reallocate state products in ways not prescribed in government plans. The American economist James R. Millar called this the 'Little Deal', after the original 'Big Deal', Vera Dunham's term for Stalin's pact with the new Soviet labour aristocracy.[21] Under the Big Deal, Soviet workers who worked hard, gained experience, and upgraded their skills were promised the rudiments of a middle-class lifestyle. The Little Deal was Brezhnev's tacit agreement with workers and managers to permit private trading and the private use of state-owned facilities on the side as long as it was discreet and did not interfere with major important government priorities.

The sideline economy was a double-edged instrument. The activities of thieves and private traders helped households to secure the commodities they desired. Trading on the side could help factories obtain the materials and supplies necessary to fulfil their plans. But officials and managers were corrupted, and work discipline, public morality, and the legitimacy of state property were undermined.

In short, the failure of the communist states of Eastern Europe to catch up and overtake the West is easily explained. Their polities were closed and authoritarian. Their economies were overcentralized and unreformable. Corruption got out of hand. In the endgame, insider interests 'stole the state'.[22]

In contrast, China has grown rapidly over three decades, significantly closing the gap with more advanced countries and levering hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. The state has not been pulled apart, and the government has not had to backtrack on reform. Yet the Chinese state remains authoritarian, secretive, and corrupt. Economic life is still politicized. The essential ingredients of a decentralized market economy—separation of the economy from politics, clear property rights, free and enforceable contracts, and the rule of law—are still missing.

How has China squared the circle? After the death of Mao, China's leaders felt their way, by accident as much as by design, to a new deal within the party and society. More radical than Stalin's Big Deal, more ambitious than Brezhnev's Little Deal, the China Deal transformed the sideline economy into a legitimate (but not law-governed) private sector, integrated into the system of regionally decentralized authoritarianism.

The deal was made first of all with China's provincial leaders; these were given new ways to contend with each other for advancement by promoting competing regional models of economic enterprise, always provided these did not challenge party rule. Then, China's entrepreneurs were offered the chance to accumulate personal wealth by competing with each other to serve the consumer directly in regional markets. But the right to enter the market was restricted to those whose absolute loyalty was assured by political connections. Without some external discipline, restricted access would create large rents and threaten to destabilize the distribution of income. One source of discipline was the competition among regional models, which forced China's new elite to accumulate rather than consume. Without fierce rivalry among provincial leaders, in Chenggang Xu's opinion, the Chinese government and economy would collapse.[23] Another source of discipline was the world market, where Chinese firms were also made to compete.

Finally, the China Deal embraced the poor. Hundreds of millions of people would be allowed to migrate to successful regions and to rise out of abject poverty, provided this did not lead to pressure for mass political rights.

The China deal radically extended the stakeholder concept of a communist society. New stakes were granted in unprecedented numbers; at the same time, the government retained the senior stake by maintaining a large public sector and withholding secure private property rights. Competition among entrepreneurs harnessed the private sector to the objectives of national economic modernization. Rivalry among provincial leaders broke resistance to continuous policy reform. Thus, China's modernization has proceeded without universal market freedoms, third-party enforced property rights, or the subjection of the rulers to the rule of law.

In 2005 for the first time China's private sector exceeded the state sector by value of output. China's private sector has proved consistently more innovative than its state-owned enterprises and (except in the case of state monopolies) more profitable.[24] Private firms have made higher profits despite the fact that state-owned enterprises have benefited from nearly exclusive access to bank credit and a valuable credit subsidy arising from implicit government guarantees. The profit gap implies, however, that China still has too much productive capital locked up in the state sector. Moreover, there is a question mark over whether China's private firms can continue to exploit the opportunities of the information revolution, given corrupt regulation, the relatively small size of most private firms, and shortfalls in China's human capital.[25]

China's experience with political modernization suggests circumstances in which the ruling party's desire for 'stability of the rear' might hinder continued policy reform. In 1989, faced with the overthrow of communism in Eastern Europe, the Chinese Communist Party decisively rejected the so-called 'fifth' modernization, democracy.

China's rulers remain above the law. As Xu has pointed out, in China 'regions have no inherent power, and regional power is granted by the central authorities'.[26] Whatever has been granted can be confiscated. The same can be said of the personal rights of all China's junior stakeholders, including private proprietors.

Can China's modernization continue beyond the 'middle income trap'? By the 1970s most countries of Latin America and the Middle East had risen from low- to middle-income status, as China has now done, but none went on to join the club of high-income countries.[27] Movement towards the global frontier requires policy reform to continue, and this must continually infringe on established economic and political interests. The chance that at some point defensive coalitions will form in China that have the power to block further change, and halt the process of catching up, remains high.

Notes

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2. J. V. Stalin, 'The Tasks of Business Executives', in *Works*, vol. 13 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1949), 40–1.
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CHAPTER 23

COLLECTIVIZATION AND FAMINE

FELIX WEMHEUER

'Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!' is the first line of the standard version of the *Internationale*, sung in the USA. Communist movements everywhere promised to abolish hunger: the Bolsheviks came to power with the slogan 'Bread, peace, and land' in Russia in 1917; the Chinese Communists declared in 1949 'No Chinese shall again starve to death'.[1] However, under state-socialist regimes several massive famines occurred with even higher death rates than in famines in pre-revolutionary times. There were famines in Russia in 1919–20, in the wake of civil war; in the Soviet Union in 1931–3 in the aftermath of collectivization; in the occupied and non-occupied areas after the German invasion of 1941, when the Nazis used hunger as a part of genocidal politics; and in 1946–7 a famine affected half the grain-growing provinces as a consequence of wartime destruction, severe drought, and government ineptitude. In China the Great Leap Forward (1958–61) caused the fourth major famine under a socialist regime, one that resulted in the deaths of millions. After the victory of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia in 1975, collectivization also contributed to a famine that continued even after the Vietnamese invasion of 1978. Finally, in the mid-1990s, North Korea was hit by famine and became an important recipient of international aid.

Despite the fact that about 80 per cent of all famine victims in the twentieth century died in the Soviet Union and China, the socialist cases have not loomed large in the burgeoning literature on the theory and history of hunger.[2] More particularly, the literature on collectivization in the two countries has not paid close attention to examining the nature of the link—if any—between the abolition of private ownership of land and famine. In the most detailed comparative study of collectivization in English, *The Red and the Green* by Frederic Pryor, the words 'famine' and 'hunger' do not even appear in the index.[3] This essay thus explores why famines occurred in state-socialist regimes and how far they can be seen as a consequence of the collectivization of agriculture. More generally, it explores the relationship of famines to the dynamics and conflicts between the communist state and the peasantry. For purposes of definition, I distinguish food

Table 23.1 Death toll of famines in socialist countries

Famine	Estimated mortality (people)
Russia:	–
Estimated civilian mortality, 1914–22[a]	10–14 million[a]
Drought in Russia and Ukraine in 1921–2	5 million[b]
Soviet Union:	
1931–3 'The Years of Hunger'	6–8 million[c]
This famine includes:	
1930–3 Kazakh Soviet Republic	2 million
1932–3 Ukrainian Soviet Republic ('Holodomor')	2.6 million[d]
Soviet Union during the Second World War:	
Death by starvation caused by the German siege of Leningrad 1941–4	750,000[e]
Deaths at the hands of Germany due to starvation, hygiene conditions, or executions of Soviet prisoners of war 1941–5	3.3 million[f]
Soviet Union	
1946–7	1–2 million[g]
China	
1959–61: Great Leap Forward	15–45 million[h]
Cambodia	
1975–9	0.5–0.8 million[i]
North Korea	
1995–2000	maximum 1 million[j]

[a] R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 403.

[b] This is the official number mentioned in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia of 1927*. Bertrand M. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 197.

[c] For a discussion of the numbers, see Rudolf Mark and Gerhard Simon, 'Die Hungersnot in der Ukraine und anderen Regionen der Sowjetunion 1932 und 1933', *Osteuropa*, 54/12 (2004), 9.

[d] Jacques Vallin, Franc Mesle, Serguei Adamets, and Serhii Pyrozhkov, 'A New Estimate of Ukrainian Population Losses during the Crises of the 1930s and 1940s', *Population Studies*, 56/3 (2002), 262.

[e] John Barber, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (London: Longman, 1991), 1.

[f] Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941–1945* (Bonn: Dietz, 1997), 244.

[g] Nicholas Ganson, *The Soviet Famine of 1946–1947 in Global and Historical Perspective* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan), p. xv.

[h] Kimberley Ens Manning and Felix Wemheuer, 'Introduction', in Manning and Wemheuer (eds.), *Eating Bitterness: New Perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 1.

[i] Cormac Ó'Gráda, *Famine: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 24.

[j] Ó'Gráda, *Famine: A Short History*, 24.

shortage or daily malnutrition in 'normal' times from famine, which is characterized by massive excess mortality.

It is immediately obvious that some of the famines listed in Table 23.1 had no relation to collectivization of agriculture. The catastrophic famine that emerged in summer 1921 in southern Russia and Ukraine was directly caused by drought and bad harvests in 1920, but its indirect causes lay in the severe requisitioning of food by the Bolsheviks during the civil war, which cut stocks of seed grain, compounded by lack of manpower, livestock, and equipment. People generally perished not from starvation but from diseases such as scurvy, dysentery, and typhus, brought on by poor diet and dreadful conditions.[4] At that time, socialist collectives played no significant role in the countryside and the Bolsheviks had just introduced the market-orientated New Economic Policy (NEP). Moreover, while some scholars see the well-entrenched system of collective farms as a cause of the Soviet famine of 1946–7, most put greater stress on heavy drought, war devastation, and the overhasty decision of the Soviet government to exclude parts of the population, especially rural workers and dependants, from the food rationing system. Due to the emerging Cold War, the government wanted to fill up the granaries and even exported grain to France and Eastern Europe to maintain Soviet influence.[5] In North Korea in the 1990s the system of collective agriculture had been in existence for several decades so in itself it cannot be seen as the cause of the famine of the mid-1990s. As a matter of fact, the urban population in the eastern provinces suffered even more than peasants in the countryside who could survive on garden plots and local markets.[6]

However, the two famines with the highest excess mortality did break out in the wake of collectivization of agriculture: 6 to 8 million people died in the Soviet Union between 1931 and 1933 and 15 to 45 million people in China between 1959 and 1961. In both cases, the famines were related to overambitious 'Great Leap'-style industrial policies that sought to take grain from the peasantry to finance the rapid expansion of heavy industry. The ruthless way in which collectivization was implemented—especially violent in the Soviet case—further contributed to a serious decline of grain production and to organizational chaos.[7] Yet collectivization ipso facto did not produce famine. In more highly developed socialist countries such as the German Democratic Republic (GDR) or the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR), collectivization, though never popular, did not have the same deleterious effects. This suggests that the two 'Great Leap famines' had a different character from other collectivization campaigns under state socialism.

Marxism and the Peasantry

It is often claimed that the founding fathers of Marxism had a strong urban bias and were anti-peasant.[8] The insular traditional peasant society was viewed by many socialists as a stage of socio-economic development that would be swept aside by industrial capitalism. They believed that mechanized large units would be more productive than small producers. In consequence, some writers have interpreted the history of communism as

a prolonged war against the peasantry authorized by the views of the founding fathers. In recent times, Western scholars have reinforced this narrative of a war between peasants and the state. James Scott sees Soviet collectivization as a prime example of 'authoritarian high-modernist planning' in which the state acted not only to pump out a greater surplus from the peasantry but also to impose 'legibility' on its rural subjects thereby effacing local knowledge.[9] Furthermore, it must be admitted that in post-socialist countries today, many villagers remember collectivization as a struggle of 'us' against 'them' (the regime) and present themselves as passive victims of circumstances.[10] However, the relation of rural people to communism is more complicated and this populist approach often underestimates the conflicts within the village communities based on age, gender, or class.[11] It is true that Karl Marx described the French peasants as a 'sack of potatoes' that could not represent itself, but had to be represented by a strong leader.[12] Yet Marx and Engels also saw the peasantry as a potential ally of the proletariat in Europe.[13] In 1882, they even argued that it might be possible for the traditional Russian village commune (*mir*) to serve as a starting point for socialist communist transformation, if a revolution in Russia were to prove a signal for a revolution in the West.[14] Marx and Engels never developed any detailed concept for the collectivization of agriculture. Shortly before this death, Engels discussed the question of how the socialist movements in France and Germany could win over the rural proletariat without alienating smallholders after coming to power:

> (…) when we are in possession of state power, we shall not even think of forcibly expropriating the small peasants (regardless of whether with or without compensation), as we shall have to do in the case of the big landowners. Our task relative to the small peasant consists, in the first place, in effecting a transition of his private enterprise and private possession to cooperative ones, not forcibly but by dint of example and the proffer of social assistance for this purpose.'[15]

As we will see later, this was easier said than done since peasants in Central Europe had a long-standing tradition of private landownership and would not give up land without coercion.

Lenin and the Agrarian Question

The Bolsheviks were the first to lead a successful proletarian revolution and to try to put Marxist theory into practice. For Lenin, it was clear that in a backward country such as Russia, the proletariat could not succeed without the support of the rural population. Lenin declared many times that the preservation of the traditional village commune (*mir*) was neither possible nor desirable, but the effect of the land redistribution, ratified by the Bolshevik Decree on Land of November 1917, was briefly to strengthen the *mir*.[16] Lenin insisted that the decree was a 'compromise' with the peasantry, but that the abolition of landlord property was necessary to strengthen the alliance between the working class

and the peasantry.[17] Faced by declining food shortages, the Bolsheviks in May 1918 declared that 'kulaks' were sabotaging grain requisitioning and called for committees of the rural poor to be formed to struggle against them. The committees were not a success: as early as August Lenin began to call for more compromise with the middle peasantry and by January 1919 a system of grain quotas (*razverstka*) that local communities were obliged to meet was introduced. This, however, did little to ease the situation of the peasantry, for the demand for grain in the towns and army was inexorable. This provoked many peasant uprisings which by 1920–1 were on a mass scale in Tambov and western Siberia and which were suppressed without mercy. The crisis, however, forced the regime to embrace a 'New Economic Policy' (NEP), in which a major concession was made to the peasantry in that grain requisitions were replaced with a fixed tax in kind and markets were once again legalized. By the time of his death, Lenin had developed a rather vague perspective to the effect that the organization of the population in cooperative would lead to a 'complete socialist society'.[18] As this suggests, the Bolsheviks had no blueprint as to how socialist agriculture should be organized, and changed their policy several times.

From Stalin's Collectivization to Famine

Joan Sokolovsky provides a useful framework for understanding the goals of collectivization in socialist regimes. She argues that it was, firstly, a model to bring class struggle to the countryside and mobilize the rural poor against the local elites; secondly, a model to establish state control over economic resources to promote industrialization; and thirdly, a campaign for state formation by eliminating competing authority structures and bring the party apparatus to the villages.[19] This helps us to understand why the Bolsheviks decided at the end of the 1920s to push ahead with forced collectivization. Ronald Suny writes: 'The New Economic Policy (NEP) established a kind of truce between peasants and state, which left the countryside and its grain largely under the control of the peasants.'[20] In 1928 this situation became grave, when grain shortages appeared once more in the cities, because peasants were reluctant to sell grain at the fixed price. Joseph Stalin spoke of a grain deficit of 128 million *poods* (around 8 million tons) at the beginning of the year.[21] As a result, the government introduced nationwide bread rationing in the winter of 1928–9.[22] Stalin now used the prospect of hunger in the cities and the army to justify the use of 'extraordinary measures', including force and draconian laws, to collect grain.[23] Even before he ended NEP, Stalin made it clear that peasants would have to pay a 'tribute' for the economic construction of the country. He argued:

> The way matters stand with the peasantry in this respect is as follows: it not only pays the state the usual taxes, direct and indirect; it also *overpays* in the relatively high prices for manufactured goods—that is in the first place, and it is more or less

> *underpaid* in the prices for agricultural produce—that is in the second place. This is an additional tax levied on the peasantry for the sake of promoting industry, which caters for the whole country, the peasantry included. It is something in the nature of a 'tribute', of a supertax, which we are compelled to levy for the time being in order to preserve and accelerate our present rate of industrial development.[24]

He stated that the goal was 'gradually to *remould* the peasantry, its mentality and its production, *along collectivist lines*, and thus to bring about the conditions for the abolition of classes'.[25]

By 1 October 1929 only 7.6 per cent of households had been collectivized. On 7 November Stalin announced that all-out collectivization was about to commence. Over the winter of 1929–30, it was carried out at breakneck pace, using punitive economic methods, such as fines and taxes, violence and deportation as the principal methods of getting peasants to join the collective farms. Central to all-out collectivization was the policy of 'liquidating the kulaks as a class', which saw more than 1 million families (perhaps 5 to 6 million people) subjected to some form of dekulakization in 1930 and 1931. Many died of hunger during deportation or in exile. Ordinary peasants who resisted collectivization could easily be labelled as kulaks as well.[26] However, one should not forget that elements of the rural poor and activists supported Stalin's leap.[27] The so-called '25,000ers', workers who volunteered to go to the countryside in November 1929, played an important role in the campaign and in the setting up of the early collective farms.[28]

The total grain collection increased sharply from 10.8 million tons in 1928 to 22.1 million tons in 1929, the first year of collectivization, and to 22.6 million tons by 1933. Even in the terrible famine year of 1932, the state was still able to collect 18.5 million tons.[29] The number of cattle and pigs fell by half and the number of sheep by two-thirds between 1928 and 1933, as peasants killed their livestock rather than hand them over to the collective farm.[30]

The first harvest in the year of the establishment of the kolkhoz in 1930 was good. However, by the end of 1930 only 24.2 per cent of peasant households had been collectivized in the USSR and 30.6 per cent in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.[31] The government concluded that the good harvests were the result of collectivization, and it resumed a hectic pace of collectivization.[32] In 1931, however, the Soviet Union was hit by a heavy drought. The figures relating to Soviet grain output are still very controversial because of the unreliability of Soviet statistics during the crisis. R. W. Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft estimate the harvest of 1930 at 73 to 77 million tons of grain, that of 1931 at 57 to 65 million tons, that of 1932 at 55 to 60 million tons, and that of 1933 at 70 to 77 million tons.[33] Whatever the precise figures, it is clear that in 1931 and 1932 the amount of food declined seriously. Nevertheless the state continued to collect more grain from the countryside than ever before. In 1932, however, it was forced to moderate its plans for fear that famine would turn into political crisis. The party gave permission for food to be sold on local markets, effectively legalizing small-scale family production, and lowered procurement rates. By 1933, the harvest was much better and the countryside started to recover. Household plots established themselves as a permanent feature of the kolkhoz. Without them, collective agriculture might not have worked at all. Peasants produced potatoes

and vegetables on the household plots not only for their own consumption but also for the whole country as well. Therefore, it may be said that the famine had a long-lasting impact on the structure of ownership in the countryside. Needless to repeat that millions of peasants had paid with their lives for Stalin's 'Great Leap'.

Collectivization had a long-lasting impact also because productivity in Soviet agriculture remained very low. In 1954, one year after Stalin's death, the total grain output remained still on a lower level than the last pre-war harvest under the tsarist regime in 1913.[34] However, collectivization allowed the state to increase its control over grain production and to squeeze a high 'tribute' from the peasantry to pay for the breakneck industrialization of the country. Collectivization also allowed the state to impose close political control over the peasantry. During the famine, theft became necessary to survival and later persisted as a cultural habit in the socialist system. Stalin personally drafted a new law on 7 August 1932 according to which those who stole socialist property, including grain stocks, could be executed. In 1932–3, 200,000 people were sent to labour camps and 11,000 were executed under this new law.[35]

Based on the current state of knowledge it is unlikely that Stalin organized the famine on purpose to commit genocide against the Ukrainian peasants. No documentary proof and very little evidence for such an order by Stalin has been found in the archives.[36] When the scale of famine became undeniable, leaders reduced grain collection plans in the second half of 1932 and early 1933 several times, especially for Ukraine and North Caucasus. Furthermore, between February and July 1933, the Politburo made no fewer than thirty-five top-secret decisions to provide small amounts of food to the countryside in these two regions.[37] This does not reduce the culpability of the Stalin leadership, since it is quite clear that it was the reckless implementation of collectivization that was the background context of the famine, a famine that led to between 6 and 8 million deaths.

Mao's Leap into Famine

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had closer relations to the peasantry and the party apparatus stronger roots in the countryside than had been the case in the Soviet Union in the 1920s–30s. In theory, the party enforced collectivization gradually from mutual aid groups to more advanced producer cooperatives to collective farms between 1953 and 1957.[38] One reason for the relatively more peaceful process in China was that old rural elites had been destroyed during the land reform, whereas in the Soviet Union collectivization took the form of a class struggle against kulaks and other 'counter-revolutionary' elements. In some areas as early as 1951 three to five mutual aid teams, i.e. about thirty to fifty households, formed lower-level producer cooperatives, characterized by 'central management but private ownership', in which they contributed land, draught animals, and equipment as capital shares in the cooperative and received payment according to their contributions. In July 1955, Mao called for 'gradual and voluntary' collectivization and this triggered a frenetic burst of activity in which 80 per

cent of households became members of these cooperatives by the following January. Agricultural output was not growing fast enough, however, and 1955–6 witnessed a 'socialist high tide'; by the end of 1956, 88 per cent of all rural households (400 million people) were in 'advanced cooperatives'. These consisted of 200 to 300 households that were paid not according to the amount of land and other assets they had contributed but according to their labour. Rights to own land, draught animals, and tools were abolished.[39] We know that this could be unpopular since many chose to leave the collectives (*tuishe*) prior to the summer of 1957 when Mao Zedong launched the Anti-Rightist Campaign in the cities and a Rural Socialist Education Campaign, as a result of which withdrawal from the collectives, along with complaints about grain policies or hunger, were denounced as 'anti-socialist' tendencies.[40]

Some Chinese scholars have argued that the collectivization was motivated not only by ideology, but also by the wish of the state to extract more grain from the countryside.[41] As in the Soviet Union, the radicalization of the collectivization policy does seem to have been linked to urban supply problems in 1953, 1955, and 1957. In 1953, urban rationing was established to deal with a supply crisis, because the state had difficulties in feeding the expanding urban population. The CCP decided as a solution to eliminate free markets and establish a state monopoly over grain trade. The state was now able to set the prices for purchase, which were much lower than the market prices. Peasants were highly dissatisfied with fixed prices, but the state could feed the urban workforce and keep wages low. In the Chinese case, scholars use the term 'dual society' (*eryuan shehui*) to describe the existence of two different societies, with urban areas subsidized by the state and rural areas relying on their own resources and production.[42] So far as the extraction of grain from the countryside was concerned, collectivization showed mixed results. The total purchase of grain rose from 33.2 million tons in 1952 to 51.8 million tons in 1954.[43] Despite the collectivization of agriculture and the increase in production, grain procurement actually decreased between 1955 and 1957. Party leaders began to believe that the gradualist approach towards collectivization had not paid off.

In summer 1958, the government launched the Great Leap Forward to transform the country into a modern industrial nation within just a few years. The Great Leap grew from a campaign to overtake Great Britain in steel production into a strategy for achieving communism in the immediate future. During the high tide of autumn 1958, peasants were organized into massive people's communes, with responsibility for production, consumption, residence, social services, and local modernization. There was no Soviet precedent for these, or for their division into commune, brigade, and production teams. Commune members received work points for all tasks carried out for the collective according to the size and value of a given year's harvest, minus the state-levied grain taxes, amounts for fodder, seed grain, and the grain reserve. Women now worked in farm and industrial work but individual families had little say in the work they did. Work was assigned by team leaders, creating problems of incentivizing the labour force.

The harvest of 1958 was good and it led to unrealistic assumptions as in the Soviet Union in 1930. According to the official statistics published in the reform era, China produced 200 million tons of grain in 1958, 170 million tons in 1959, 143.5 million tons in

1960, and 147.5 million tons in 1961.[44] This meant that agricultural production declined by over 30 per cent between 1958 and 1960. In the first two years of the Great Leap, the state took more grain from the countryside than ever before. In 1958, it purchased 58.7 million (net) tons compared to 48 million tons (net) in 1957. From the first half of 1959 signs of famine became undeniable. Yet provincial leaders vied with one another in exceeding procurement targets, and Mao refused to moderate policies in the summer of 1959. The famine years of 1959 and 1960 saw the highest procurement rates in the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC) between 1952 and 1979. In 1960, the worst year of the famine, the government was still able to collect 51 million tons (net).[45] Scholars have offered a multitude of causes by way of explanation for the famine; central was the fact that highly exaggerated production results in autumn 1958 led to hugely inflated procurement targets for the following year, which local leaders were determined to fulfil. Compounding this problem were the massive transfer of manpower from agriculture to industry, which created imbalances that were impossible to cope with; the waste of food supplies in the public dining halls in the autumn and winter of 1958 where commune members were required to eat; and the continuation of grain exports by the government. There were natural disasters, notably drought, but today no Chinese or Western scholar seriously suggests that these played the major causal role.

In my view, procurement rates can be seen as a measure of the balance of power between the state and the peasants. During the Soviet and Great Leap famines, procurement reached a deadly level for the rural population, which did not qualify for food rations from the state. As in the Soviet Union, the CCP tried to crack down on peasant resistance. In early 1959, several provincial governments started violent campaigns against the under-reporting of grain (*manchan sifen*) and mobilized cadres to search for 'hidden grain' in peasant houses. In addition, peasants went into the field to 'eat green' (*chi qing*), meaning to eat unripe grain or maize before the state could take the harvest.[46] In China, in contrast to the Soviet Union, no draconian legislation was passed to punish the theft of food, although local cadres often beat and even tortured those suspected of theft.[47] During the peak of the disaster in 1960, the government mobilized the whole state apparatus to prevent the rural famine turning into an urban famine. It defined the priority as being to secure the grain supply for the most important cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and the Liaoning region at the expense of the countryside.[48] Only when the grain stocks of these cities were almost empty in autumn 1960 was Mao willing to readjust the Great Leap.

Notwithstanding these political decisions, neither the famine in China nor the Soviet Union was primarily one of 'entitlement'. Amartya Sen argues that famine generally takes place because sections of the population lose their 'entitlement' to food rather than because of a generalized slump in food production.[49] The two Great Leap famines, to some extent, constitute counter-examples to Sen's thesis, since there was a massive decline in food production. However, his approach is still useful. For it is clear that peasants in the Soviet Union and China were vastly more likely to starve to death than urban workers, intellectuals, soldiers, or party cadres, simply because they had no access to the rationing system of the cities.

As in the Soviet Union in 1933, the CCP had to make major concessions to the peasantry. In 1961 private plots (*ziliudi*) were reintroduced and the public dining halls were abolished. The so called '60-points-decision' reduced the size of the people's communes. The new structures were based on the boundaries of the 'natural' villages and small production teams. Furthermore, the government imported 5 million tons of grain per year to feed cities. As a result, the burden of the peasantry was significantly reduced. In 1962–3, 20 million people were sent back from the cities to the countryside. The state thereby got rid of the responsibility to feed these people and could further lower procurement rates. In this regard, Stalin's Great Leap was more successful than Mao's, because the Soviet government did not have to reverse the urbanization that had taken place during the First Five-Year Plan (1928–32) and the country was still able to export grain in the following years. As in the Soviet case, these concessions were never withdrawn during the Mao era, although we know that Mao was not happy with them.[50] Only as a result of appalling famine did the ruling parties in the Soviet Union and China learn to set procurement and taxation at a level that allowed the peasants to survive and the state to continue industrialization.

Collectivization and Socialist Agriculture without Famine

In the years immediately following the Second World War, large parts of Europe—France, Germany, Poland, Switzerland, Greece, and Turkey—all suffered food shortages. In the people's democracies established by the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, agrarian reform and the distribution of land to individual peasant households was high on the agenda. In countries such as East Germany or Estonia, however, land reform could not solve the problems of food shortage in the cities.[51] The general food shortage encouraged leaderships of the people's democracies to go beyond land reform and pursue the radical option of collectivization. Stalin advised his comrades not to carry out the nationalization of land and collectivization too fast. In 1946 he told the Czechoslovak premier Klement Gottwald: 'Our path was short, rapid, and cost much blood and sacrifice. If you can avoid this—avoid it.'[52] In contrast to Soviet collectivization, the communist parties followed a more gradualist approach. Peasants in these countries had long traditions of private landownership, unlike the communal peasant in tsarist Russia. And most of the ruling parties in the people's democracies lacked the legitimacy that the Bolsheviks or Chinese Communists had, since they came to power thanks to the victory of the Soviet army rather than as leaders of an indigenous or national revolution. Therefore, they were more generally afraid to alienate the population with violent policies. In most countries, the first collectivization drives took place from 1948. The ruling parties made clear that the vast majority of the new cooperatives should be collectively owned but that peasants should be allowed private plots. In general, collectivization was less violent than in the

Soviet Union. Rich peasants—for example the *chiabur*, the Romanian counterpart of the Soviet *kulak*—were discriminated against, but integrated in the end into the collectives.[53] No mass deportation of 'kulaks' took place. The governments in Eastern Europe also allowed more time for the process of collectivization. Generally speaking, after the first initial drive in 1948, it was interrupted by a period of retreat following Stalin's death in 1953. In Yugoslavia and Poland, peasant resistance actually led to decollectivization in the early and mid-1950s. Elsewhere policy radicalized again around 1955. By 1962 at the latest, collectivization was complete in Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and Romania.[54] Bulgaria had the highest number of state farms in Europe, with 90 per cent in 1987, while the East German cooperatives (*landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften*, LPG), were characterized by a high degree of specialization and division of labour. Yet private ownership was by no means unknown. In 1987, private farmers tilled 78 per cent of the land in Poland, 82.3 per cent in Yugoslavia, and 13.7 per cent in Hungary.[55] In none of the people's democracies did collectivization produce famine.

The economic transformation of agriculture increased the state's control of food, yet productivity remained relatively low. Some have argued that agriculture remained the 'Achilles' heel' of the socialist economy. As in the cases of the Soviet Union and Maoist China, peasants in Romania developed everyday forms of resistance such as stealing, poor work performance, and under-reporting of land and production.[56] The state was relatively helpless to counter these strategies; in most cases, neither political repression, moral exhortation, nor economic incentive helped.[57] However, not all groups in the villages lost status and property as a result of collectivization. For example, in Romania the new collective order increased social mobility for young Roma people and women.[58]

The Great Leap Famines in Historical Perspectives: A Revisionist Outlook

Collectivization in Eastern Europe and in the early PRC did not result in famine. Why then did it do so in the Soviet Union in 1931 and China in 1959? As we have seen, Stalin and Mao deliberately abandoned a gradualist strategy of encouraging peasants to join collectives voluntarily. In the Soviet Union, most peasants were unwilling to join the cooperatives and they exercised enough control over the land to cause the regime critical problems of food supply. Stalin thus seized on the grain crisis of 1928 as a window of opportunity to carry out a 'crushing blow' against the 'kulaks' and 'saboteurs' once and for all. Although progress towards collectivization went much more smoothly in China—albeit not without resistance—agricultural productivity was not rising fast enough to free up resources for industrial development, feed a growing urban population (58 million in 1949, 72 million in 1952, and nearly 100 million 1957), increase the supply of raw materials for industry (e.g. cotton and oil seeds), or earn the foreign exchange

needed to import capital goods (until the mid-1970s, over 70 per cent of China's exports were agricultural products and processed agricultural products, such as textiles). In 1957, therefore, Mao Zedong decided to resolve these difficulties at a stroke through the creation of people's communes and, in so doing, make a leap into communism. Yet as this suggests, although political decisions were at the heart of the process that led to famine, these political decisions need to be set in a socio-economic context.

The Soviet Union in 1928 and China in 1958 were desperately poor and backward countries. In the 1950s, China was one of the poorest countries in the world. The rural population in the provinces of North China lived on a calorie intake that would be considered a famine level today.[59] Both countries had experienced serious famines in the not-too-distant past. In 1891 in Russia around 500,000 people had died in the last great famine under the tsarist regime.[60] In republican China between 1911 and 1948 over 18 million people fell victim to droughts and floods.[61] By contrast, none of the countries in Eastern Europe had experienced any catastrophes like this in modern times.[62] Against this background, the strategy of 'Great Leaps' becomes more comprehensible, while remaining massively risky. In the event the risk did not pay off and the consequences were horrific. The 'shock therapy' of breakneck collectivization actually reduced agriculture production by between one-quarter and one-third.

Alongside the decline of grain production must be set the strain placed on the food-supply system by rapid urbanization and increasing grain export to finance imports of industrial technology. The Soviet Union and China experienced urbanization whose rapidity was unparalleled in history. In the Soviet Union, the urban population increased from 26 million to 40 million between 1927 and 1932. Conversely, the number of peasant households dropped from 26 million in 1929 to 19 million in 1937.[63] In China, the urban population increased between 1957 and 1960 by over 19.5 million and the number of workers rose by over 25.8 million.[64] Most of these people had to be fed by the state at the expense of the countryside. This explains something of the violence with which food was taken from the countryside. Furthermore, grain exports increased massively in the first years of the leaps. According to Davies and Wheatcroft, the Soviet government exported 4.8 million tons of grain in 1931–2. This quantity was much greater than in the mid-1920s, but far lower than the 10 million tons the Russian Empire had exported before the First World War. The following year, in 1932–3, the exports were reduced to 1.8 million tons.[65] In China, the net quantity of exported grain rose from 1.88 million tons in 1957 to 3.25 million tons in 1958. The country actually exported 4.74 million tons in 1959, the first year of famine, and 1 million tons during the peak of the catastrophe in 1960. If the governments had stopped grain exports, they would have had to cancel several industrial programmes, but millions of lives would have been saved. I calculate that with the 1.8 million tons of Soviet grain exported in 1932–3 over 8.2 million people could have been fed a daily ration of 600 grams for a year. If we use 500 grams as a daily ration for the estimate in the Chinese case, over 5.4 million people could have been saved with the amount exported in 1960.

During the high tide of the Great Leaps, Stalin and Mao were so obsessed with the need to modernize their economies in a short space of time that they were not willing to

slow down industrialization and urbanization. As a result, the governments destroyed any balance between the different sectors of economic, production, and food consumption. When they finally realized that their policies had caused massive death in the countryside, Stalin and Mao introduced relief policies and agricultural reforms, but too little and much too late. The famines were never publicly acknowledged during their lifetime and kept secret. The two supreme leaders must, therefore, be held culpable for the death of millions. By contrast, we should at least give some credit to the governments of Lenin in Russia in 1921–2 and Kim Jong Il in North Korea in the mid-1990s, for they allowed foreign relief agencies to operate in the country to some degree. This saved many lives.

To sum up, there is no necessary relation between collectivization and famine. In many cases, collective agriculture was introduced and established for decades without causing mass starvation, especially when socialist governments followed a gradualist approach and were willing to accept a hydrid ownership structure and mixed economy in the countryside. In the Soviet Union in 1931 and in China in 1959, however, collectivization did produce famines on a mammoth scale. These resulted directly from government decisions to launch overambitious industrial programmes to escape the backward conditions of their countries. Rapid urbanization and the resulting increase of millions of eaters in the rationing system, together with grain exports, overwhelmed agricultural capacity. Rural consumption was curbed to a point that tens of millions could not sustain themselves. These famines, though the result of political decision-making, have nevertheless to be seen in a longer historical context and in the context of the crushing problems caused for the mass of the population by chronic economic backwardness.

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CHAPTER 24

THE POLITICS OF PLENTY: CONSUMERISM IN COMMUNIST SOCIETIES

PAUL BETTS

Tales of dazed and deprived Eastern Europeans confronting the outsize material bounty of West European shopping centres and department stores are some of the most popular accounts of the seismic upheavals associated with the fall of communism. For many observers these last dispatches of socialist realist journalism only confirmed long-held perceptions of captive and impoverished Eastern European citizens starved of colour and consumer choice, trapped in the drab misery and supposedly frozen unmodernity of 'real existing socialism'. Cheaply dressed East Germans feverishly purchasing fresh fruit, IKEA housewares, fresh coffee, and Western pornography with newly given Deutschmark 'welcome money' encapsulated the shock of the new and a world turned upside down. Not for nothing was the defunct German Democratic Republic lampooned as Central Europe's new 'banana republic,' given East Germans' widely noted quest for bananas in their forays into post-Wall West Berlin. To be sure, the grey blandness of East European life had been a staple of Cold War criticism since the 1950s, perhaps best captured in Czesław Miłosz's 1953 classic, *Captive Mind*: 'The chronic lack of consumer goods renders crowds uniformly grey and uniformly indigent. When consumer goods do appear, they are of a single, second-rate quality. Fear paralyzes individuality and makes people adjust themselves as much as possible to the average type in their clothing, gestures and facial expressions.'[1] The influx of bright and fetching Western goods of all kinds into Eastern Europe after the fall of communism became a central element in the broader tale of the great triumph of capitalism over its long-time regional rival, as the brash arrival of Pepsi Cola, Pizza Hut, and McDonald's across Eastern Europe was greeted as part of a needed 'shock therapy' to bring the formerly socialist half of Europe into the late twentieth century. Not that these views were limited to crowing Western ideologues. The triumphalism of the West was frequently accompanied by the shame of underdevelopment in the East, memorably evoked by

none other than Boris Yeltsin himself. In elegiac tones, he described an early 1990s trip to a supermarket in Houston, Texas, in which shelves 'crammed with hundreds, thousands of cans, cartons, and goods of every possible sort' made him feel 'sick with despair for the Soviet people'.[2]

Such interpretations have become standard shorthand for understanding the differences between East and West and for rereading the events of 1989 as a Whiggish victory of Western 'soft power' over its more militaristic, hardliner Soviet rival. It also reflects a broader interest, both popular and academic, in the history of consumerism that had taken wing since the 1980s, confirming for many the long underestimated power of consumer desire as a driving force of world history, especially evident during the last century.[3] Communist regimes invariably come out badly in these consumption studies, pilloried as they are as rogue states of mismanagement, injustice, and tyranny, be they measured against the yardstick of American consumerism or according to socialism's inability to live up to its own Marxist ideals. The Soviet system is typically subjected to a dark round of laughter and forgetting in having built 'the world's most advanced late nineteenth century economy, the world's biggest and best, most inflexible rust belt'.[4] The historiography on the relationship between communism and consumerism has largely been coloured by two books published in the early 1980s: János Kornai's *Economics of Shortage* (1980) and Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller, and György Markus's *Dictatorship Over Needs* (1983). Both titles give the game away, as communism is taken to task for sacrificing free enterprise and people's 'natural' desire for economic freedom on the altar of centralized planning and social engineering. Histories of consumerism under socialism have also liked to focus on the relatively lavish lifestyles of the corrupt governing elite as testimony to the irrepressible petit-bourgeois attitude and moral hypocrisy of the whole system, as cars, apartments, dachas, Western goods, and political favours were supposedly the true currency of these societies.[5] In these renditions, consumer goods stand in as the vessels and embodiment of liberty and choice, the deprivation of which inevitably spells the ruin of all states unable or unwilling to make good on promised provisioning. With the result that consumer satisfaction is seen as the basis of political peace and social stability, and woe betide those states that do not heed the message—Louis XVI's France, Tsar Nicholas II's Russia, and Eastern Europe in 1989 are cited as ready historical examples of what happens when basic consumer demands are not properly met. Whatever one thinks of these analyses, the underlying assumption is that the rise of full-blown consumer societies has forever effaced the relationship between economics and politics. A recent instalment of this logic is Francis Fukuyama's 1992 bestseller, *The End of History and the Last Man*. While the blind spots of his Beltway musings about the velvet globalization of political liberalism are well known, it is often overlooked that one of his key chapters is called 'The Victory of the VCR', inadvertently raising the question of just what exactly triumphed in 1989. The larger point is that consumerism is viewed as that which has held liberal Western polities together, while this very same force caused the undoing of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union.

While the stirrings of 'consumer culture' were apparent in Stalin's Soviet Union during the interwar years, as the 1930s saw concerted efforts to popularize high-quality

luxury goods en masse like phonographs, perfume, caviar, and even champagne, it was the relative peace and stability of the post-war period that witnessed the real emergence of socialist 'consumer culture'. Of course this was a slow and fitful process, laden with ideological trepidation. After all, Soviet Union built its economy (and identity) on the liberation theology of heavy production and the old Marxist mantra of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'. The 'higher phase of communist society', as Marx prophesied, would only be attained through hard work and sacrifice, savings and investment. Antipathy towards 'bourgeois egotism', commodified desires, and surplus production was a mainstay of orthodox socialist economics from the 1920s to the 1950s, in that they were seen as obstacles in the construction of a higher, more egalitarian society. Despite their differences, all socialist regimes were united in their view that modernization and consumer development must stay socialist in spirit and practice. Hungarian shopkeepers in early 1950s, for example, were discouraged from arranging window displays that might arouse consumer desires, since these potential demons needed to be kept under cultural control. At the 1957 Prague Conference on Advertising Workers of Socialist Countries, the principles of socialist advertising were contrasted with Madison Avenue machinations, and codified as simply the need to publicize rational forms of consumption; to raise the culture of trade and retail service; and to educate consumer taste.

A telling example of the divergent ways that the superpowers communicated their identities to the world was the 1958 Brussels World Fair, the first major international show of its kind since the infamous 1937 World Exhibition in Paris. For its part, the US was not shy in using its pavilion to showcase the fabled 'American Way of Life', as manifest in affordable washing machines, dishwashers, televisions, and sundry consumer goodies—a Cold War formula that was reproduced at the high-profile American pavilion at the Moscow Fair a year later. Such goods were to presage a better world to come, and to steal a march on the Soviet Union and its own reconstruction policies. The USSR countered with a new image of itself too. Gone, however, was the Prometheus-like messianism and militarized monumentalism of the Soviet pavilion at the 1937 Paris show; on offer this time instead was a decidedly post-Stalinist image of Soviet society based on peace and cultural achievement. To this end the Soviets put heavy industrial machinery, the Bolshoi Ballet, and especially the Sputnik at the centre of its exhibition. Iakov Lomko, head of the Soviet Information Bureau, made clear that the Soviet pavilion should foreground 'Soviet democratism, the country's rising standard of living, and its struggle for peace'.[6] Consumerism was thus not elevated as a central element of Soviet self-identity at this point, at least not to an international audience, as the USSR tended to stress technological achievement and the popularization of high culture as the hallmarks of socialist modernity.

The death of Stalin in March 1953 witnessed significant changes across the Eastern Bloc, as socialist regimes endeavoured to balance heavy and light industry so as to attend mounting consumer demands. The June 1953 uprising in East Berlin was crucial in this respect, to the degree that Eastern Europe's first serious political crisis since the war amply illustrated the political cost of not addressing desperately needed housing

and chronic consumer shortages. In its train came the introduction of so-called New Course policies across the region, which aimed to adjust national economies to domestic consumer concerns. Further political crises across the Bloc intensified the campaign for economic reform. The relative liberalization of the Hungarian economy under János Kádár ('Kadarism') was spurred by the regime's effort to use consumerism as a means of recouping popular support after the crushed uprising of 1956, with similar echoes in Poland at the same time. The same logic informed new policies in East Germany (the GDR) after the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, since this 'anti-fascist bulwark' was clearly built to staunch the flow of citizens leaving the country for the higher wages and living standards enjoyed in the West. Slow but gradual improvement in the supply of mass-produced consumer goods could be seen across the Bloc, with 'reformist' Yugoslavia in the lead. A new generation of communist leaders even built their profiles around delivering more goods to the people. After coming to power in 1965, Romanian premier Nicolae Ceaușescu pursued aggressive trade and diplomatic relations with the West, and was even featured on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1966 as emblematic of a new 'third communism', wherein Romania's 'Life Under a Relaxed Communism' was supposedly the new norm. Such examples pointed up the regional differences between the socialist republics—while Yugoslavia and Hungary looked more admiringly towards the West, more politically orthodox countries such as Czechoslovakia and East Germany tended to cleave closer to Moscow. Such trends reflected broad social changes under state socialism everywhere, signalling a shift from long-preached ascetism and sacrifice to an increasing yearning to get and spend. Khrushchev's bon mot 'goulash socialism' (used to describe the liberal economic policies of Kádár's regime) captured this budding consumerist sensibility. And Khrushchev himself led the reformist cause, urging more attention to consumer goods production in the broader effort to bring about the transition to full communism.

The 1960s witnessed the beginning of the Great Leap Forward in 'consumer socialism'. By that time the so-called standard of living had become a key ideological battleground of Cold War rivalry, as each system used economic success as a means of showcasing political legitimacy. At the USSR's Twenty-Second Party Congress in 1961, for example, Khrushchev stressed the central importance of 'Everything for the People—Everything for the Welfare of the People!', and each Eastern Bloc leader followed suit in paying more heed to the socialist version of the 'citizen-consumer'. While its actual results may look meagre to us today, everyday socialist life was indeed undergoing major transformation. A new socialist 'mass culture' was beginning to materialize, complete with new shopping centres, mail-order catalogues, fashion, furniture, household goods, and shiny consumer durables of all varieties. New self-service stores appeared across the socialist bloc, along with new illustrated weeklies and fashion magazines touting these new wares. Fashion became an interesting case in point, as there was a concerted effort to develop a distinctly socialist fashion style that satisfied both the desire for glamour and workplace necessity. The stepped-up production of plastics was hailed as a new material that would transform everyday culture and make life more colourful and enjoyable. Interior design, advertising, and ceramics took on modern appearances and became

increasingly available. The policy to modernize the socialist household—including its look, tastes, and residents—characterized the 1960s, as the Soviet Union and its client states built their own version of the 'Cold War Kitchen' replete with consumer technology and creature comforts.[7] By the mid-1960s the ownership of modern consumer goods—such as refrigerators, washing machines, and radios—was nearly ubiquitous, and other luxury goods (such as televisions and cars) became common features of socialist life. These transformations were not simply limited to household goods, however. The move towards consumerism under socialism also saw the expanded consumption of high culture, often in the form of mass-produced classical music records, subsidized concerts, published poetry, and theatre tickets. Consumer prosperity was thus embraced as a key element of national pride for socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and beyond.[8] Some of this was already on display in the Eastern Bloc national pavilions at the Brussels 1958 World Exhibition mentioned earlier, including those of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and especially Yugoslavia. They were all keen to put forward a face of their country as progressive and modern, and various crafts and consumer goods were showcased as emblematic of a new 'people's socialism' at the time. Particularly revealing was the way in which Kádár's Hungarian pavilion used design and consumer artefacts to broadcast messages of normalization after the harrowing uprising in Budapest just two years before.

Similar developments were taking place in Maoist China as well. While priorities still lay with steel manufacture, industrial production, and collectivist enterprise, consumerism was embraced by the regime as a means of consolidating communist gain, flattening out socio-economic hierarchies and winning over the population at large. Private enterprise may have been officially eliminated in 1956, but key areas remained open to market forces. Especially indicative here was the field of advertising, in which communist authorities sought to use socialist advertising (taking their cues from the Soviet Union) to stimulate and manage consumer desire across the country. While the emphasis fell on consumer education and truthful publicity about new products, in ideological contrast to supposed 'capitalist advertising', there was a concerted effort to encourage the consumption of national products at the expense of 'foreign goods'. Certain commodities were essentially off limits, such as cosmetics and perfume, since they were characterized as middle-class female products associated with the unwanted imperial past. Even so, Communist China developed in similar ways to their socialist brethren in Eastern Europe.[9] Indeed, the modernization of all of these Second World economies was a feature of the 1960s, as the ownership of radio sets, televisions, and even cars became key indices of the coming of 'socialist consumerism'. The genie of consumer desire was out of the bottle.

Housing of course remained pre-eminent as the most desired consumer item. Given the harrowing scale of physical destruction during the war, it came as little surprise that the home emerged as a major talking point for every post-war government, East or West. Across war-torn Europe there was renewed interest among state officials, industrial leaders, educators, and museum curators to mount numerous housing shows as markers of national recovery, social improvement, and aesthetic education. While the 'cult of

the domestic' played a key—and still underestimated—role in wartime life in both the Allied and Axis countries, it acquired new vigour and authority in the aftermath of the Second World War and the Cold War only intensified its importance. The American Occupying Government was quick to exploit housing exhibitions as a means of showcasing the 'American way of life' to destitute West Germans and other West Europeans. That many of these early Cold War shows were sponsored by Marshall Plan administrators made plain the perceived connections between reconstruction, re-education, and material abundance that underlay a new transatlantic identity after the Second World War. In this sense, the famed 'kitchen debate' between Khrushchev and US Vice President Richard Nixon at the American pavilion at the Moscow Fair in 1959 was less the beginning of the Cold War politicization of consumerism than the culmination of a trend that had commenced already ten years before.[10]

The identification of the home as a site of consumer re-education and social engineering was equally manifest in Eastern Europe. There too the much-touted 'standard of living' and the visual markers of material comfort played a decisive role in the larger Cold War struggle for ideological legitimacy. In part this was fuelled by Cold War competition to build more and better dwellings than its Western counterpart, not least because adequate worker housing was seen as a key litmus test of 'people's democracy' and can-do socialism. New housing was also tied to new consumerism. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed the trend towards urban planning and the construction of model socialist communities, such as Nowa Huta in Poland, Sztalinvaros in Hungary, or Dmitrovgrad in Bulgaria, all of which were underpinned by reformist social and consumer policy that took heed of popular aspirations for greater individual material well-being. Various socialist regimes (such as Hungary) even encouraged the private ownership of homes as a means of stabilizing social life, and building a society around the traditional nuclear family. Indeed, the 1950s saw the formalization of new socialist family codes across Eastern Europe based on conservative mores and pro-natalist values. This in itself was not altogether new. Stalin's 1936 Constitution did formally recognize and protect what was coyly called 'personal property' (as noted infamously in Article 10), which included homes, personal belongings, and savings. By 1948 'every citizen' enjoyed the right to buy or build one home (of one to two storeys and up to five rooms), and citizens were allowed to own livestock. Only six months after Stalin's death, Khrushchev set the tone by insisting that 'we must do away with the prejudice that it is a disgrace for workers to own cattle as personal property!' By 1957 taxes on inheritance were all but removed across the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc, and a 1961 USSR ordinance extended these personal property provisions laid out in the 1936 Constitution to all Soviet satellite states.

Not surprisingly, the spectre of consumerism haunted socialist states, as they sought to manage its potential destructive power in a number of ways. The strict constitutional emphasis on 'the satisfaction of material and cultural needs' first articulated in Stalin's 1936 Constitution, and later included verbatim in the civil codes of all socialist republics after 1945, was intended to curb the demons of 'surplus value' and unrestrained consumer desire. Moral education was deemed crucial in assuring that socialist society would not turn into its ideological enemy. The heavy emphasis on morals at the time was

part of the concerted effort to hold together a society in the throes of febrile modernization and socialist transformation. Indeed, the 1960s was the Golden Age of the socialist etiquette book, giving rise to a number of mass-produced manners manuals that aimed to create new standards of 'socialist civility' in the realm of everyday interaction. Other responses came from new social science. By the end of the 1960s, the socialist state's growing preoccupation with consumerism found expression in a new guise: market research. Across the socialist world new market research institutes were founded, often in the name of increasing the quality of goods and the distribution of socialist products. Ostensibly these institutes not only studied consumer production and habits, with an eye to better meeting consumer demand; they also routinely sent market researchers into people's homes, asking them about furniture preferences, design ideas, and aesthetic predilections. A surprising amount of painstaking and confidential analyses on domestic interiors, decorative tastes, and consumer penchants were drafted and sent to various government committees. Included were elaborate consumer questionnaires detailing deep-seated gender, generational, and even class differences in socialist taste and consumer spending. These marketeers served as veritable foot soldiers in the wider crusade to modernize socialist everyday life and to bring these countries along the path of 'consumer socialism'. Often seemingly trivial issues about domestic lifestyle attracted considerable attention from these officials; many reports highlighted how the 'gap between the supply and demand' of modern household appliances and modern furniture was deepening resentment and criticism towards the state. As a result, these marketing scouts were valued for their role in gauging private dissatisfaction and identifying the obstacles to the full development of socialist material culture at the grass-roots level.

The experiment in socialist consumerism brought in its train a host of problems. In part this was because communist ideology was traditionally deaf to domestic needs and desires, and making these changes was neither easy nor quick. Consumerism not only aroused acquisitive appetites that the state could not satisfy, and thus subjected the populace to cycles of arousal and frustration, but the desire to modernize the look and appearance of everyday socialism—and here the fashion industry was the most glaring case—was whetted by the print media, and this had a corrosive effect on older socialist ideals of sacrifice, solidarity, and deferred gratification. A number of observers mocked the coming of 'refrigerator socialism' as a means of diverting attention away from fundamental political problems. Perhaps even more dangerous was the coming of open class divisions based on social distinctions, often made manifest by consumer goods. Class difference within socialism was of course a very delicate issue, and that was rarely acknowledged outright in public. But by the 1960s, this began to change. Perhaps the best observer of this new socialist consumer society was no other than Djilas himself, who followed up his 1957 *The New Class* on the rise of the new socialist bureaucracy with an equally trenchant but far less known 1969 book, *The Unperfect Society*. In it he argued that a 'new, new class' had come into existence in Yugoslavia, broadly defined as a new and ever-widening 'middle class' based on consumerism and class privilege.[11] Several years later Václav Havel coined the term 'post-totalitarianism' to capture this new blend of 'dictatorship and consumer society' in Eastern Europe: 'What we have here

is simply another form of the consumer and industrial society, with all its concomitant social, intellectual and psychological consequences. It is impossible to understand the nature of power in our system properly without taking this into account.'[12] The opening of high-end luxury shops in various Eastern Bloc capitals catering to relatively wealthy and well-connected consumers (initially justified as a means of attracting badly needed Western currency from Western tourists) opened a two-currency system. The East German state's decision in the early 1970s to allow Eastern Bloc consumers to spend their own Western currency (often thanks to family connections in the West) in these high-end shops underscored the glaring hypocrisy between the touted egalitarianism of official communist ideology and the growing social divisions created by access to Western money and exclusive prestige objects. In their desperate search to make ends meet and to satisfy pent-up consumer demand, socialist states now shamelessly peddled the fantasies of commodity fetishism that Marxism was supposed to have overcome. That East Berlin's government quarter of Wandlitz, popularly known as 'Volvograd', reflected this sense of Party entitlement and class difference, fuelling bitterness and envy at all levels.

With time this resentment gained broad popular voice, as citizens felt more and more emboldened to lodge formal complaints against state authorities on a range of consumer issues. While the civil right to file petitions harked back to Lenin's entreaty to citizens to get involved with their state, these citizen complaints became a common feature of socialist life in the 1960s and 1970s, with certain states (most notably the GDR) becoming veritable 'cultures of complaints' that threatened to overwhelm local officials. Many of these formal grumblings centred on below-par housing, inadequate heating, and the poor provisioning of consumer necessities. Exposure to Western media, contacts with relatives on the other side of the Iron Curtain and pre-Wall visits to the West provided some sense of comparison, as people demanded higher standards for basic consumables—tastier sausages, softer toilet paper, and better clothes—readily available in the West; others pressed for wider access to more out-of-reach goods, such as fresh fruit, a flat of one's own, and/or automobiles. At root was the ever-expanded understanding of needs across these socialist economies in the 1950s and 1960s, as the distinction between necessities and luxuries became more and more hazy. To be sure, housing, heat, bread, potatoes, margarine, cigarettes, and tram tickets remained cheap and plentiful, not least because they were considered important for work. Books, theatre tickets, and newspapers were also heavily subsidized for their recognized cultural value. However, other items deemed inessential—such as gas, washing powder, colour televisions, and cars—were very expensive, and of low priority to the regime. People, for example, often had to wait years for paid-for consumer items; East Germans notoriously had to wait seven to ten years for delivery of Trabants on account of production bottlenecks. While states had long pointed with pride to housing, education, employment, and medical care as indicators of socialist progress and justice, other consumer durables served as vehicles of increasing social discontent.

Given that the state promised to provide for all, these seemingly banal problems of provisioning quickly shaded into quite trenchant political criticisms of the regime's

ability to make good on its promises. The quality of goods was a perennial source of anger among citizens, especially since the government held itself accountable for all matters of daily welfare. The flourishing of black markets under state socialism served as informal 'second economies' to compensate for the inadequacies of the state-planned economies, and were increasingly tolerated by socialist regimes because they helped plug shortages in public services and aided badly needed goods distribution. For many people, household needs were satisfied by a blend of bartering, illegal markets, and/or personal contacts at various locations in the supply chain. People imaginatively organized their own networks of goods and services, and over time the state turned a blind eye to this extra-legal barter system, since getting adequate materials depended on participation in the semi-legal shadow economy. House repairs for example were often done by hand with the aid of informal exchange and favours, while tools and supplies were routinely pilfered from workplaces to make up for the lack of available material and state services. The presence of these alternative economies made the state look even more inept and callous, leaving it open to criticism and complaint. That the complaint system was built on and actively mobilized the language of direct democracy only made things more dangerous. It created a kind of vicious circle in which the original idea of encouraging expressions of dissatisfaction as a means of political engagement soon proved unwieldy and even counterproductive.

Such anger and disgruntlement also contained a gender dimension. Women in socialist societies were forced to juggle the competing demands of waged work and housework, and this 'double burden' became a source of great frustration. The ever-present queues that marked socialist consumer society consisted largely of women. What is more, women wrote most of the complaint letters to local authorities, and often campaigned as working mothers to secure better social services from the state. While it is certainly true that socialist states tirelessly championed the nuclear family as the bedrock of social stability and political peace from the mid-1950s on, the emergence of the socialist family as an object of state intervention was very much a product of the mid- to late 1960s. At the time the expanded scope of welfare policies into the home was largely introduced in the name of relieving overburdened mothers saddled with the lion's share of child-raising and housework. Domestic reform initiatives (to secure the stepped-up delivery of new kitchens, heating systems, washing facilities, and modern appliances) were spearheaded by various women's groups, who successfully made the case to their governments that family residential problems deserved urgent state assistance. Across the socialist world (not unlike their counterparts in the West) women increasingly demanded labour-saving household appliances, cleaning supplies, better furniture, easily prepared foods, and more attractive clothing for themselves and their families. As noted by Donna Harsch in her 2006 study of the GDR, *Revenge of the Domestic*, this meant that the domestic sphere—the perennial blind spot of traditional socialist theory and practice—came back with a vengeance in the 1960s and 1970s, as female activists agitated for more state welfare assistance at work, at home, and in the family. In the end, this reformist campaign served as the socialist world's answer to the 1968 feminist slogan in the West that 'the personal is the political'.

By the same token, consumerism was also becoming a field of identity politics. The cultural power of consumerism in the East was partly due to the value attached to Western artefacts themselves. Behind the Iron Curtain everyday Western goods—empty shampoo bottles, jeans, cigarettes, coke cans, music, and other sundry things—were highly prized for their exotic quality and other-worldly provenance. Such sentiment was neatly captured by Croatian journalist Slavenka Drakulić in her 1987 *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*, when she recalled a doll that she received from Italy in her childhood as 'an icon, a message from an another world, a fragment of one reality that pierced into the other like a shard of broken glass, making us suffer in some strange way'.[13] As a result, objects from the West (typically in the form of gifts) played a key role in linking East and West over the decades, and the Wall proved quite porous in this respect. This was especially the case with jeans and pop music among young people, as Leninism was increasingly losing out to Lennonism behind the Iron Curtain. But reducing such developments to facile Americanization is misleading. Recent scholarship has shown how elites across Europe effectively fended off US pop culture (what Louis Aragon derided as a vulgar 'civilization of bathtubs and Frigidaires') in the name of preserving European (and Asian) national identities, often taking what aspects of American culture were palatable to personal interest. This could be seen in Soviet youth's attitude towards Western music and clothing, as they assimilated them into their everyday lives with less ideological contradiction than one might suppose;[14] similar occurrences took place elsewhere, be it with hippies across the Baltic or punks in Leipzig. The popularity of self-made clothes that mixed styles from East and West—and made up for production shortages—was another factor that distinguished socialist consumer culture from its Western rival. Consumerism became a key expression of self-determination in a world where such individual autonomy was severely circumscribed. As Katherine Verdery has argued: 'Thus consumption goods and objects conferred an identity that set you off from socialism, enabling you to differentiate yourself as an individual in the face of the relentless pressures to homogenize everyone's capacities and tastes into an undifferentiated collectivity. Acquiring objects became a way of constituting your selfhood against a deeply unpopular regime.'[15]

These trends intensified over the decades. The 1970s saw a new emphasis on imaginative varieties of consumer tastes, even if the consumer objects (and their packaging) remained virtually unchanged from the 1960s. The trend towards more 'individual forms' and personalized expression was noted in market research as well across the Bloc. All of this was interpreted as part of a more accommodationist relationship between state and citizen, as witnessed in a marked relaxation of policies that demanded cultural homogeneity and conformity. People increasingly used their homes (or rooms, in the case of teenagers) as theatres of pent-up individuality and subcultural pursuits. This was the era of the popular penchant towards spending weekends at country cottages, small garden plots, or dachas outside the city, and consumer magazines featuring home improvements, fashion, and leisure activities flourished in response. This was often condemned on political grounds. A range of socialist commentators remarked that political passivity was bought by rising living standards and the promotion of

socialist consumerism, as socialists were characterized as having turned away from the collectivist politics of the past in favour of cultivating their own gardens. The black market was crucial in this respect. Getting what one could by hook or by crook became a major preoccupation of life in the East. As one Czech observer writing in the 1980s put it: 'People are allowed to better their living standard in illegal ways . . . Everybody does it, so nobody is clean. This is a more cohesive factor than the secret police—this spread of corruption that unites all Czechs.'[16] But these were only stopgap measures, as socialist economies reached a real crossroads in the late 1970s. In Eastern Europe, the regimes were being squeezed by both international economic forces (most notably the oil crises of 1973 and 1979) and political dangers gathering at the frontiers. This not only meant the ever-present alternative of West European prosperity across the Iron Curtain, but also the political unrest in the east; the Polish uprisings of 1970, 1976, and 1979 served as grave object lessons of what might happen elsewhere if communist pricing policy of basic goods went awry. As one GDR state commissioner conceded in 1981, 'at our front door we have imperialism with its propaganda on three television channels. And now we have the counterrevolution in Poland at our backs.'[17] Consumerism was once touted by the regime as an idealized sphere of social justice and socialist victory; it was now becoming a popular experience of deep disappointment and disillusionment.

What can be said about this in the end? At first glance these broader consumer trends may be read as showing that socialist society was increasingly battling over distinctly 'bourgeois' notions of materialism, desire, and dreams of the good life. The regimes' growing inability to combat—and increasing accommodation with—'capitalist egotism' is often seen as an admission of the very limits of the socialist makeover of everyday citizens, as well as an implicit acknowledgement that these 'pre-socialist' bourgeois attitudes were here to stay. The interpretation for communism's collapse in Eastern Europe is often attributed to the doomed effort to compete with the West on its own terms, having forfeited its own ideology and material culture on the altar of Mammon and international bank credits. The desperate search for Western loans in the 1970s only highlighted the deep flaws of market socialism and the bankruptcy of any alternative material vision of socialism for the future. As Mark Pittaway put it, socialist regimes across the regime 'quietly abandoned their attempts to create a new, distinctively socialist material culture, replacing it, in the artefacts that became the objects of socialist consumerism, with an engagement with patterns of Western consumer culture'.[18] Consumerism is thus identified as the battlefield where the East foolishly confronted the West, and lost its way, principles, and integrity as a result. The neo-liberal 'consumer revolution' in China (punctuated by its entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001) only confirms this view of the unsustainability of communism in the face of capitalist expansion. The fatal turn of the socialist states towards the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in the 1970s in order to acquire needed Western currency meant that they had unwittingly hastened their own demise by 'selling off' their beloved Iron Curtain long before citizens ever breached the borders in 1989.

However, one could counter that the unravelling of Eastern European socialism was not really due to the sirens of Americanization. The dangerous wager occurred during

the pivotal 1960s, when socialist states opted to promote consumerism and its attendant cult of comfort and material happiness for all as a mainstay of communist legitimacy. They gambled that consumerism could go native on socialist soil, and remain under Marxist cultural control. Americanization had little to do with it in this context; this was to be something new and different—a non-capitalist version of consumer culture. As Emily Rosenberg neatly remarked: 'Mass consumption contributed to the Cold War's end less because it was closely identified with the United States than because it was no longer primarily associated with it.'[19] What this meant was that the fallout was theirs alone. In fact, these 'societies of shortages' willy-nilly ultimately spawned a new kind of society born of material neglect and grievance. In a world defined by abundant promises and material scarcity, consumer goods naturally became the front line of social friction and popular frustration, and consumer issues became one of the few places where citizens could vent their everyday grievances to the paternalist state. What Sheila Fitzpatrick has written about Stalinist culture is equally valid for state socialism after 1945: the writing and reading of these complaint letters 'is as close to a public sphere as one is likely to get during the Stalin period'.[20] Anger at the gap between the promise of socialist consumerism and the reality of deteriorating public services and unavailability of basic foodstuffs led to an explosion of popular unrest in Poland and Romania in the 1970s. Indeed, the beginning of Solidarity was linked to Jaruzelski's raising of food prices by 241 per cent following the imposition of martial law in early 1982. So whereas it has long been asserted that the market had replaced the civic realm in the West, something strangely similar took place under socialism too. Already in the late 1970s Eastern Europeans were aware that consumerism had effectively replaced voting and political opposition in the sphere of politics.[21] These market desires and resentments ironically helped create a budding socialist version of civil society.

For some this may seem peculiar, not least because an influential strand of Eastern European historiography has worked to argue (turning Marx on his head) that it was society, and not the state, that eventually withered away under Soviet-style socialism. Admittedly, the classic liberal notion of an independent civil society flourishing in the social spaces between the family home and the state found little expression under state socialism, as state and society were always blurred and overlapping. There was no critical public sphere, and Western-style civil rights, such as freedom of speech, assembly, and movement, were essentially off-limits all the way through to 1989. Given that it rested at the interface of economics and ideology, materialism and idealism, as well as the Party and the people, consumerism occupied a tense terrain of social politics, and gave rise to expanding conceptions of rights. Socialist citizen rights clearly never added up to Western civil and political rights, and were more in keeping with what T. H. Marshall famously called modern 'social rights', defined as 'the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security . . . to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society'.[22] This logic was firmly in line with socialist governments' 'materialist' understanding of civil rights at the time, to the extent that they saw the right to work, decent housing, health, higher education, and even 'rest and relaxation' as fundamental human rights, as opposed to the 'abstract' liberties celebrated by their Cold War rivals.

Under state socialism civil rights may have always remained subordinate to economic rights; but once consumerism moved to the centre of social and economic policy, its citizens pressed for their social rights accordingly. During the 1980s a number of new consumer cooperatives were founded to help supply citizens with badly needed consumer goods, and to stitch together new political networks. While such consumer groups under socialism could be traced back to the interwar Soviet Union, they took on heightened political expression under late socialist regimes. It is no coincidence that Poland's Federation of Consumers (*Federacja Konsumentow*) linked up with the Solidarity movement, as new rights were now being articulated in line with claims to basic standards of living and decent quality of life.[23]

If nothing else, these developments underline just how seriously many residents took these broadcast dreams of consumer bounty. In this area, the state's ideological campaign succeeded far beyond expectations. What people arguably took most to heart were the original claims of Marxism itself—social justice and material compensation. Citizens thus took their expectations and dreams to state authorities in various forms. And for those who did pursue personal grievances and complaints, the state inadvertently provided ordinary citizens with a new rhetoric of redress against the authorities as part of the social contract between citizen and state. But such anger was not simply the result of socialist failure; it was also the effect of socialist success. As Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski put it: 'The improvement of living conditions turned out to be politically dangerous. Far from appeasing people, making them more docile, as certain Sovietologists expected, such measures slowly opened up a space for critical thinking, ultimately for rebellion. A slightly reduced misery made misery more painful; it operated to release the energy of revolt.'[24] By 1989 the state was being sued for false advertising, as the people drove out those in charge for a range of reasons.

The whole memory industry of life under socialism in Eastern Europe is a telling example of what mattered to citizens, at least by the end. It is well known that over the course of the 1990s many Eastern Europeans dug in their heels and defended their lost communist world with surprising passion and even longing. Such nostalgia was usually geared towards the socialist security of the past, and in many ways was symptomatic of the disillusionment felt by many Eastern Europeans in the face of turbulent transition. In the 1990s it was reported that Romanian industrial workers displayed portraits of Ceaușescu on lockers and workbenches, and rosy reminiscences were noted in 1990s Hungary for the socialist consumerism of the Kádár era.[25] Similar trends were noted in Poland and Russia as well.[26] A poll conducted as late as 2007 showed that around 20 per cent of Germans 'would like to see the Wall rebuilt', and 'the desire to see the wall return is as high among former citizens of communist East Germany (the GDR) as it is among those from the west'.[27] Moreover, the 1990s also witnessed the crass commodification of communism in Poland, East Germany, and elsewhere, as witnessed in the opening of new museums and holiday tours dedicated to emphasizing the lighter and more genial sides of life under the red flag, complete with Trabant-chauffeured communist tours through Eastern European capital cities. A tropical version of this kind of communism-lite is on offer for Western tourists in Cuba as well. The pain and terror of

the communist past is often downplayed or removed altogether; what is foregrounded instead is a plucky yet doomed counter-culture to the West, formed by the experience of consumer deprivation and political tyranny but ultimately redeemed by a resilient culture of sharing, biding time, and making do. How China will rewrite the historical relationship between communism and consumerism remains to be seen, with global implications for all of us. But for its twentieth-century European variant, the fate of state socialism was tethered to the dreams and disappointments attending the brave new venture in socialist consumerism, and it was on this risky ground where last century's socialist states fatally diced with their legitimacy.

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PART V

COMMUNISM AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

CHAPTER 25

THE LIFE OF A COMMUNIST MILITANT

MARCO ALBELTARO

TRANSLATED BY STEPHEN A. SMITH

Party life, as we understand it, is an ensemble of practices that derives from the shared values that operate inside a political community to which a person belongs by choice rather than by birth. The community formed by those who joined communist parties was founded on a politics that derived from members' reading of history, common understanding of the world, and a shared vision of the future. It was a community of 'us' and 'them', of insiders and outsiders. 'They', in the words of Richard Hoggart, could be ' "the people at the top", "the higher-ups", the people who give you your dole, call you up, tell you to go to war, fine you, make you split the family to avoid a reduction in the Means Test . . . "get yer in the end", "aren't really to be trusted", "talk posh", "are all twisters really", "never tell yer owt" (e.g. about a relative in hospital), "clap yer in clink" . . . "treat y'like muck" '.[1] From a more ideological standpoint, 'they' were the class enemy, people beyond redemption so far as the socialist cause was concerned, but also sometimes those who had simply not yet become communists. 'We', by contrast, were the community of militants, of comrades, no matter which country they lived in or communist party they belonged to. 'We' referred to a transnational political community nurtured through reciprocal exchange and polemic, and above all through a common way of life.

The sources from which one can reconstruct the coordinates of the life of a communist militant are fragmentary. It is a matter of searching the memoirs of those who belonged to what Raphael Samuel called a 'lost world' and what other scholars have called a 'rarefied world'; of searching for descriptions buried in journal articles, party documents, or police files.[2] The real interpretative and methodological challenge is to interrogate the public self-representation of communist militants and leaders. This self-representation for the most part concentrates on high politics rather than on the mundane aspects of militancy, on the big moments of collective action rather than on individual stories. Yet

communism was a profoundly pervasive ideology that completely moulded the life of its supporters. This pervasiveness was officially endorsed: for example, the statutes of the Turin Federation of the largest communist party in the West, the Italian Communist Party (PCI), declared in the 1950s: 'Everyone who becomes a member of the PCI is required . . . to improve their capacity for manual, technical and intellectual work; to have relations of fraternal solidarity with other members of the party; to lead an honest and exemplary private life; to defend the party in public and private against every attack.'[3] Such official prescription was intended to ensure that the communist militant was considered a better person than average, the prototype of the 'new person' that communism aspired to create. As Eric Hobsbawm wrote: 'Here public and private, becoming a better person and building a better world, were considered indivisible.'[4]

A distinction must be made, however, between the life of a militant in a communist party that was striving for power and one in a party that had succeeded in achieving power, notably the Bolshevik party in Russia after 1917. In the case of the latter, the boundary between state and party was barely perceptible. In instances where communists were the ruling party, the first generation of militants committed themselves to what could be called rhetorically the 'construction of socialism', but the generation that followed, usually—although there were exceptions—ended up living their militancy within a bureaucratic system. Bureaucratization had the effect—particularly in the Soviet Union, but also in other cases of 'actually existing socialism'—of transforming the militant from someone who chose a life animated by continuous striving, by a constant search for equality and liberty, into someone who practised a kind of 'office work', the existential coordinates of whose life were very different from those of militants in Western communist parties. Bureaucratization was one of the negative consequences of power; as Franco Milanesi notes, 'practical work stops at the point where power begins', since 'the militant can stay in a party and make it an instrument of force and transformation, but there is no longer a place for him or her in a party that has become a state'.[5] The dimension of organized power seems to have been precisely the factor that served to empty militancy of significance, as is dramatically conveyed in Arthur Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon*. Moreover, in the words of Hobsbawm: 'Power does not necessarily corrupt people as individuals, though its corruptions are not easy to resist', and this went equally for communist power.[6] In Eastern Europe, therefore, being a communist militant arose almost naturally from the fact of being born in a communist country; it was less the result of a life choice.

It is for these reasons that this essay concentrates on the way of life of militants in countries where communists were not the ruling party. Among these the PCI held a particularly important position. It was the biggest communist party in the capitalist West and its leaders and militants probably left more testimonies, more documents, and thus more traces of their daily life than those in other countries. Nevertheless it was typical in key respects of Western European communist parties. One of the factors that the French, German, and Italian communist parties had in common at their foundation, as Bernard Pudal has noted of the French Communist Party (PCF), was that their founders lacked 'political capital', and acquired it only through joining the Third International (Comintern).[7]

Initially, they acquired influence as a result of splits in the socialist movement: as early as October 1920 for the German Communist Party (KPD), when the Independent Social Democrats (USPD) split at the Halle Congress, and for the PCI following the so-called process of Bolshevization in the mid-1920s, following the entry into the party of the *terzini*, the 'Third Internationalists', formerly the maximalist wing of the Italian Socialist Party. It was precisely Bolshevization that served to homogenize European communist parties in accordance with a single model, the two main pillars of which were centralization and the enforcement of democratic centralism.[8] This homogenization had real effects on organizational structures and on the modus operandi of activists, serving to limit and constrain any attempt by a national communist party to establish a degree of autonomy. It encouraged a kind of 'compression' of the communist world wherein key differences in national conditions were ignored in favour of a single universe in which the Soviet Union, like the sun, radiated its light on all its satellites, regardless of their form and size. Bolshevization favoured the influx of new worker cadres into the communist parties, yet the desire to impose a regimented and militarized vanguard structure tended to reduce the overall number of party members. In the period between 1924 and 1928 the membership of European communist parties fell by about a third, although there were significant exceptions such as the German Communist Party, at that time the largest party, which maintained a more or less stable core of activists, and the Communist Party of Great Britain, which between 1924 and 1928 tripled its membership.[9] Yet if Bolshevization, which almost immediately turned into Stalinization, of the European communist parties operated in a top-down and authoritarian manner, militants in the national communist parties did not necessarily perceive it as an infringement of their liberty. As Eric Weitz has noted in relation to the German Communist Party, 'Even before the so-called Stalinization of the KPD, radical workers in Germany looked to Russia and the Soviet Union as the heralds of revolution, the model that Germany would have to follow.'[10]

The first task that militants in the major Western European parties had to face was not revolution, but the struggle against fascism. This required that they learn to operate clandestinely.[11] The issue of whether to become a clandestine party established an important line of demarcation in Western Europe. Under fascism secrecy became the horizon of militancy in most parties in Europe. The widespread need for secrecy in the interwar period fixed the character of party work. Arthur Koestler illustrated this well when he recounted his experience of the German Communist Party under Nazism. 'By then I lived immersed in a mental world that I already described as a "closed system", comparable to the universe created and ordered by the medieval scholastics. All my feelings, my attitudes towards art, literature and human relations became reconditioned and moulded to the pattern. My vocabulary, grammar, syntax, gradually changed.'[12] In this period the militant lived an underground existence, enclosed in the narrowest of worlds, working to obtain small results yet running exorbitant risks. The nature of his or her life was thus influenced more by the characteristics of a secret society and by conspiracy than by participation in a modern political party. Yet in this period socialists, left-wing Catholics, radical democrats, as well as communists, worked in the underground, their

lifestyles not so different one from another compared to how they would change after 1945. Following the Second World War, the majority returned to open activity, but some, such as those in the Spanish and Portuguese parties, remained confined to underground struggle, albeit with significant differences.

The year 1945 created a watershed in the European communist movement. As Donald Sassoon has written, 'the radical winds raised by the war, and upon whose strength western communists had staked their political future, had abated'.[13] After 1945 the prospects for revolution were much less marked than they had been before. Socialist revolution became an objective consigned to a date to be fixed later, something postponed to a future that could not be defined exactly. Consequently, in a short space of time the European communist parties changed their organizational structures, transforming themselves from vanguard parties composed of a limited number of militants, fighters, and narrow groups (such as the 'groups of five' in Germany) into mass parties with a looser discipline, with thousands—millions in some cases—of members. This crucial transition obviously engendered a change in the existential coordinates of communist militants and reshaped their daily lives. Being a militant in the period from 1945 to the end of the 1960s in Western Europe was to be involved in what was, as Brigitte Studer has written of the Swiss Communist Party, 'at once a community, an order, a family—a way of life'.[14] But this was very different from what has been called 'Stalinism as a way of life', in that the essence of politics was very different in democratic countries.[15] Both the PCI and PCF, for example, notwithstanding significant differences between them, operated in broadly similar ways within pluralistic political systems and this had common effects on the lifestyles of militants.[16]

A significant instance can be seen in the parties' youth organizations. The aspiration to form a new person from infancy was a common aspiration of all communist parties. In the Soviet Union the formation of communist youth was just one element in an educational system directed by the party-state. Communism was a condition into which one was born, experienced as an all-pervasive, natural horizon of existence. This emerges clearly from the stories told by Josie McLellan in her book *Love in the Time of Communism*, which explores the nature of intimacy and sexuality in the German Democratic Republic.[17] Yet communist education assumed a very different significance when it was the outcome of choice, when one chose to let communism mould one's life. In the Western communist parties the Youth Federations tended to be less rigid and more 'lay' than the parties themselves. With the passage from the underground to open political work, Western communist parties—above all the PCI and the PCF—ceased to emphasize a regimental style in their youth work, seeing it more as a process of gradually inducting young people into a political community. In Italy the Youth Federation, having been a catchment from which militants could be drawn by the handful during the period of fascism, became a space in which young people could refine their commitment to communism, a space where they could combine education with recreation, a space where they could stabilize and structure the choice they had made to become communists. Yet there were substantial differences in the methods used to help children 'become completely "Red" ', even within the communist parties of the West. In the

Communist Party of the United States the formation of an activist continued to be rather militarized, whereas in Western Europe it was felt that militarization during the clandestine struggle against fascism had led to a sacrifice of political creativity.

Why people chose to become communists is a complex question. In the memoirs of militants we can identify at least two rationales. Significantly, the memoir of Giorgio Amendola, parliamentary deputy for the PCI from 1948 to 1980 is entitled *A Life Choice*, whereas that of Paolo Robotti, a less important leader of the PCI, is entitled *Chosen by Life*. The latter reflects a type of determinism that often characterized the autobiographies of militants of the generation of the Third International.[18] As Franco Andreucci has noted, militants of this generation tended to see themselves as 'grains of sand swept by the great wind of history' even as they emphasized the decision they had made to join the party.[19] The act of joining the Communist Party, as Ignazio Silone wrote, 'was not to be confused with the act of joining any political party. For me, as for many others, it was a conversion, a total commitment.'[20] For many, continuing the Christian trope, it was a 'second birth', as Claude Pennetier and Bernard Pudal have written of the PCF.[21] It is difficult to identify the intimate reasons that lay behind public justifications for joining the party. J. Edgar Hoover was curious as to why so many 'honest citizens' became communists—a curiosity that derived from his desire to combat communism in the USA and on a global scale—and tried to find the answer in the testimonies taken by the FBI from certain ex-communists. The CPUSA was rather different from the parties analysed in this essay, but the testimonies of American communists are nevertheless useful, though marred by too strenuous a concern to justify what they perceive in retrospect to have been a terrible error. According to Hoover, some confessed to becoming communists after they lost their faith in God, embracing the Communist Party as a reference point for a new faith, one aimed at making the world a better place. Others found in the Communist Party a place where they could feel themselves equal to others, in contrast to their previous sense of being disadvantaged in the world. Still others found sustenance for their journey into the party in the struggle against fascism.[22] Hoover doubtless overplayed the differences in the routes that individuals took, but we can identify similar motivations among those who joined the Western European communist parties after 1945.

Many individual stories, all differing from one another, can be categorized in terms of a threefold typology.[23] First were those who joined because of family tradition; then there were those who became communists after coming into contact with militants in the workplace; finally there were those who chose to join the party because they shared its ideological platform and its conception of the world and of history.[24] In autobiographical reconstructions, these three routes tend to become fused and presented as a single leap towards communism. This is true, for example, of the memoirs of Maurice Thorez, who became the leader of the PCF, who described the process that led him to join the party as an 'awakening'.[25] There is a tendency in the self-representations offered in memoirs to exaggerate the extent to which the choice to become a communist was a response to injustice and exploitation, whether experienced by militants themselves or by their families. Pietro Secchia, who became vice-secretary of the PCI, was born

in 1903, and presents his decision to become a communist as arising from his experience in the labour movement, but it seems more to have arisen from ideological conviction.[26] Militants tended, consciously or unconsciously, to represent their individual experience through the interpretative grid of historical determinism: their adhesion to communism was presented as a natural response to class exploitation, a consequence of ideological demystification or a class-conscious appraisal of one's condition. They tended, in other words, to insert their personal experience into a history that was seen as moving inexorably towards socialism. Often the decision to join the party was mediated by what Koestler called an 'apostle', a mentor, someone who performed the role of persuader and resolver of doubts. Koestler's own account of his decision to join the German Communist Party, however, is articulated in terms that are more emotional than the rational terms offered in many autobiographies. 'It did not require much persuasion to make me into a rebel. Since childhood I seem to have lived in a state of chronic indignation. When this state reached its peak, I joined the communist party.'[27] Once the decision to join the party had been taken, a period of fine-tuning began, an 'apprenticeship' to use Thorez's term, that involved reading books that would becomes one's bible, books that militants would exchange and guard jealously.[28]

Having entered the party, the militant was drawn into an educational project designed to create the 'new person' who was to form the base of the mass party. 'If "baptism" gave or confirmed faith', it was noted of the PCI, 'it was activism that proved its intensity: activism established credit and created rankings in the petty, informal hierarchies of the cell or section, as well as in the larger hierarchies of the province or region.'[29] Activism was a measure of one's altruism and moral character, and militants were constantly called upon to put their energies at the service of the party. A good sense of what such altruism entailed can be seen in the organization of the festival of *Unità* in Milan in 1977, which lasted for ten days. A journalist calculated that members of the Milanese Federation of the PCI put in 21,750 eight-hour working days, or the equivalent of 174,000 hours of voluntary labour, to stage the festival.[30] This was only one example in a list that could be extended indefinitely of the generosity and extreme dedication of militants, and was something that made communist parties qualitatively different from 'bourgeois' parties.

The distribution of the daily newspaper of the party was another activity that consumed a great deal of the militant's energy. The PCI borrowed the practice of distributing *l'Unità* door to door from the PCF's mode of distributing *l'Humanité*. The newspaper sale became a secular ritual celebrated every Sunday, a kind of Mass for the masses.[31] Everyone in the party—young people, workers, peasants, intellectuals, simple militants, and leaders—took part in the distribution of the newspaper. In the 1950s and 1960s a million copies of *l'Unità* were distributed daily. It was in part an act of sociological research, although perhaps more in the PCI than the PCF, not least because *l'Unità* had a bigger distribution among Italian communist voters than *l'Humanité* had among French communist voters.[32] But for both parties, door-to-door sale of the newspaper was a precious opportunity to come into contact with hundreds of people on a single day, an opportunity to relate not to the 'masses'—a concept that was slippery and

ambiguous at best—but to the flesh-and-blood men and women who comprised the mythical masses.[33] The newspaper distributors were 'thousands of human thermometers planted on the ground', and the information they gathered was vital to the party leadership. Such information was used by Annie Kriegel in her study of the readers of the French communist press. Whereas the readers of *l'Unità* were for the most part militants, sympathizers, and voters of the PCI, the readers of *l'Humanité* were, she shows, more articulate and less identified with the political community that revolved around the PCF: 'The readers of the communist press constituted a population that was not homologous either with the electorate or with the community of adherents of the Party. It was a distinctive population.'[34]

One of the differences between the PCI and the PCF was in the field of education. The PCI, in accordance with the thought of Antonio Gramsci, always put the task of gaining hegemony in society ahead of that of taking power. It was this, together with the search for an 'Italian road to socialism', that gave the PCI its decisive stamp, and made it even during the 1940s and 1950s more autonomous of Stalinist politics than its French counterpart. This was visible in the *l'Unità* festivals organized by the PCI. Like l'*Humanité* festivals in France, these festivals were opportunities to bring together people well outside the ranks of the party.[35] They were similar to the l'*Humanité* festivals, too, in that 'by virtue of their continuing for more than half a century, their size, and the laudatory and critical appreciation they evoked, (they) belonged . . . to the national festive patrimony and may be seen as a form of popular expression'.[36] The success of the *l'Unita* festival was due, however, to its recreational character—to the fact that one could enjoy good food at cheap prices—although this was rooted in a conscious political project. In the period after the Second World War, the PCI chose to become a catalyst of the people, and sought in the festivals to combine 'high politics' with a collective gathering, a moment of ritual with a moment of play, all as part of a hegemonic project aimed at 'communizing' broad strata of the population by democratic means. In both France and Italy political festivals had their origins in the early labour movement.[37] However, it was only with the birth of communist parties and, in particular, with their development on a mass scale in the post-war period, that they became a means whereby the parties could make contact with people whom they did not meet through the normal channels of communication, and at the same time advertise the political and organizational power of the party.

The place where most of the life of the militant was concentrated was the party section.[38] The section was a world of its own, a world of political and personal contacts, as well as the base of the solid pyramid that was the party structure.[39] Koestler said of his activism in the German Communist Party: 'Outside the cell, which had become my universe, I now had few friends and social contacts. Even these were either communists or sympathisers.'[40] In 1946, after twenty years of fascism, the PCI urged the sections of the party to move full steam ahead, so that the section became the 'organism that characterised the return to legal existence, to activity in the full light of day'.[41] The priority of activists in Italy, as in the PCF, was to 're-emerge, strengthen themselves, and come out of isolation'.[42] The sections were the places where, particularly in the north, activists came into contact with people from all over Italy—many of them migrants—with their

own dialects and customs. The section was the crossroads where the lives of militants intersected, lives marked by a fixed schedule that served to merge personal life with that of the party. On Mondays the secretary of the section would participate in the meeting of the secretaries of the Federation; Tuesday was the day the section committee met to organize its work, in line with the directions received from the Federation; Thursday was the day all section members met, with the agenda of the meeting set by the campaigns the party was currently promoting. But the Thursday meeting was also a chance to discuss problems that activists would go away and investigate, problems linked to the local administration or encountered at the workplace.

The rebuilding of the legal organization of the PCI took place with great speed, and already in 1950 it had well over ten thousand sections across the whole country, although these were distributed unevenly.[43] This was an extraordinary surge in growth but not unique. In France the party saw the number of cells rise from 16,925 to 18,126 between January and March 1945 and then to 36,490 by December.[44] The sections were not only a place to gather, hold meetings, and discuss politics, they were an instrument of political action in the locality and, especially in the immediate postwar years, they tackled problems of public life such as restoring electric lighting or drainage that had been put out of action by the war. The party was particularly keen to provide an alternative venue for young people beyond those provided by purely recreational organizations or by the Church, which had traditionally functioned as a meeting place for young people. And so the sections turned to recreation, organizing dances, boxing clubs, gymnastics, as well as theatres and libraries with the 'right' books to read. For many, such libraries provided the first opportunity they had ever had to hold a book in their hands.

The memoirs of many leaders and activists paint a picture very different from the stereotype of party life as unrelievedly grey. It is true that the political community of the party, so open to its own members, could be ferocious towards its adversaries, especially towards ex-comrades.[45] But for members, the section provided far more than politics. As Diego Novelli, ex-mayor of Turin, noted when talking of his experiences in the PCI, 'the sections were places to go even on Sunday evenings' because that was when there were dances.[46] These dances did not neglect politics, since at 11 p.m the music stopped and there was what was called the 'political appeal', in other words a brief speech in which a local leader would remind the assembled throng of their duties of class solidarity. There was also a lottery in which one could win books or subscriptions to party journals. As Novelli notes, 'the caricature of the PCI as a boring, monolithic monster . . . simply does not correspond to reality'.[47]

The section was also a nucleus that generated not only political initiative but also social solidarity, welfare initiatives always being more typical of the PCI than of other European communist parties. The recollections of militants are full of stories of how the party carried out service to the community. During the flood in Polesine in November 1951, for example, the PCI in Turin organized practical assistance, providing help and offering hospitality to evacuees. This is only one example of how the most entrenched communist party in Europe, through its local connections, conceived its project as one not only of political struggle but also as one of building solidarity with

the masses. The sections also served as buffers between activists and the wider society, allowing the former to work off pent-up tension. Following Liberation on 25 April 1945, many sections organized boxing clubs for ex-partisans. 'There they let off steam,' said one of the organizers of this initiative. In other words, they provided a physical outlet for the frustrations of the many partisans who were conscious that the Italy for which they had fought was definitely not that of De Gasperi's government.[48] The sections were thus sites of political action, discussion, struggle, solidarity, sociability, and entertainment.

The scope of a communist life, especially in the ferment of the early postwar years, was clearly defined. Miriam Mafai, at that time a young activist who later became the partner of Gian Carlo Pajetta, a leading parliamentary deputy of the PCI from 1946 to 1990, described it thus. 'We were the "new party" and we were linked to it as though by marriage, i.e. indissolubly. None of us thought to "realise our potential", a term that was then unknown to us. We wished rather to spend our lives contributing to the realization of a project that we summed up in a rather confused way as one of democracy, justice, defence of the unemployed, the homeless, of children and—who knows—perhaps even of socialism.'[49] 'For this project many students left university, many kids left their families, many young people left the offices where they were already working as lawyers, architects, notaries and chose to become "professional revolutionaries", putting themselves at the service of the party and the working class.'[50] The communist activist lived a life of 'permanent mobilization', of 'hyperactivism' that entailed 'a spirit of sacrifice, emulation, anti-individualism, attachment to the party, seriousness; these were the principal elements that gave organized activity ethical-political depth.'[51] As Margaret McCarthy recalled: '[I]t was the actual, practical activities of the young Communists . . . rather than the abstract theories of revolution and proletarian dictatorship which claimed me for Communism'.[52] And it was precisely the spirit of self-sacrifice that ensured that the militant became a 'full-time communist', without ever confusing 'his being a communist with the aspiration to "make a career in the party" '.[53]

These words were written about the PCI, but they could easily be extended to other European communist parties, because although national specificities played an important role in the history of communism, of equal importance was the conviction, shared by militants at every level, that they were part of a single world movement. It was precisely this conviction, incorporated into the individual's consciousness at the deepest level, that was the determining influence in moulding and unifying the most intimate dimensions of subjectivity. This came about through choice rather than imposition. Militants consented to shift the axis of their lives from the individual to the collective plane, from the singular to the plural, chose to renounce elements of individuality and personal intimacy. One thinks, for instance, of the public self-criticism that militants were required to carry out on certain occasions. Eric Hobsbawm cites an example of how the Communist Party could use its authority to upset the plans of an individual. In the 1930s the German Communist Party, then in exile in Paris, asked one of its militants, Margaret Mynatt, to move from Paris to London because the party needed her there. This meant abandoning the person she felt to be the love of her life, but she did

not hesitate, since this was what the party demanded of her.[54] Thousands of militants set aside their personal interests in order to plunge into the mainstream of history: 'one must be capable of subordinating one's whole personal life to the interests of the proletariat'.[55] It was a difficult choice but it offered symbolic and political rewards: 'The party was our life. We gave it everything we had. In exchange we obtained the certainty of victory and the experience of fraternity.'[56] Central to this was the element of 'hyperactivity', the continuous straining towards a goal to be achieved: it was this that kept people united, that maintained a uniform way of life and created a community. As Annie Kriegel has written of the PCF, 'the party gave its militants the possibility of integrating into a subculture that was sufficiently complex and heterogeneous not to seem artificial, sufficiently narrow not to lose its prestige as an elite set apart, sufficiently numerous not to weaken into a one-dimensional and monofunctional sect'.[57] Belonging to such a community allowed the militant to feel that it was worth losing certain aspects of individual freedom in favour of a collective freedom.

This might lead one to conclude that the communist way of life was rather oppressive, but it was not the case. This stereotype gained ground over the years and became authoritative under the impact of the anti-communist liberalism of the Cold War, although paradoxically it achieved its maximum development after the fall of the Berlin Wall, after the deadline had expired, so to speak. This is not to deny that greyness and oppression were features characteristic of some communist parties in some phases of their history, but this was mainly true of the countries of 'really existing socialism', and even there these features were not a defect linked to the nature of communist ideals, but a reflection of the degeneration and bureaucratization of these parties that led ultimately to their atrophy.[58] With the passage of time, however, from the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, not to mention the 1990s, the party section did become a spent force, just as did the parties as a whole. With increasing privatization of social life, the section lost its role as a means of aggregation and became simply a place to hold meetings. And when the dramatic years 1989–91 arrived, overwhelming the communist parties of Europe like an earthquake, militants who had dedicated every spare moment to their political community found themselves orphaned.

The communist parties of Western Europe in the second half of the twentieth century, as in the first half, were never uniform. There were differences in political line, in structure, in lived experience. For many, the PCI represented a model, a point of reference—one recalls that in the PCF there was a current that sought to 'italianize' the French Communist Party—but the communist parties of Western Europe retained distinctive national characteristics. Notwithstanding this, the existential coordinates of the militant's life were surprisingly similar or, at least, points of similarity outweighed points of difference. There was a kind of internationalism 'from below'—distinct from the official fraternal links between national parties—that expressed itself in the feeling militants had of belonging to a great world movement. 'Our cell was one of several thousand in Berlin and one among the several hundreds of thousand basic units of the Communist network in the world', Koestler wrote.[59] This deeply rooted sense of belonging to a single global community had the effect of making each militant's way of life similar. Yet

with the passage of time, what had once been a 'life choice' became something different, something much less totalizing and much less solid. Raphael Samuel, studying the British Communist Party, declared that 'one reason which might be hypothesized for the increasingly precarious character of political affiliation would be the impact of radical individualism and the progressivism of the 1960s which made personal identity and individual self-assertion the highest good'.[60] If this is true, then it is still truer that from the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s political parties in general lost the public significance they had once had, and became more elusive, indefinite, mutable, and uncertain. Political communities were fractured, torn by the centrifugal force of individualism. For their part, moreover, the communist parties had to come to terms with the end of the communist system, the end of actually existing socialism.

Communist militancy ran through the politics of the twentieth century like a red thread. As Toni Negri and Michael Hardt said of the militancy that typified the worker in mass production, it aimed 'to create a real alternative to the system of capitalist power. The organization of mass trade unions, the construction of the welfare state, and social-democratic reformism were all results of the relations of forces that the mass worker defined and the overdetermination it imposed on capitalist development. The communist alternative acted in this phase as a counterpower within the process of capitalist development.'[61] Yet communist militancy was more than that: the horizon of action was the political struggle to create a 'world that was free and equal' within capitalism, but its psychological strength derived from the fact that the joy of struggle was counterposed to the misery of power.[62]

Notes

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CHAPTER 26

RURAL LIFE

JEREMY BROWN

Everyday life under communism was predominantly rural. Of the more than 1.3 billion people living in communist countries in 1975, approximately two-thirds were villagers. This number was as high as it was because China, the largest communist country by far, was 83 per cent rural at the time. Peasants were also a majority in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. North Korea's population mix—57 per cent urban in 1975—was more like the Soviet Union and most of Eastern Europe. In the Soviet Union of the mid-1970s, about 40 per cent of the population was rural. This was a big change from the 1920s, when Russia was four-fifths rural.[1]

When we imagine what life was like for rural people in communist societies, the first picture that might come to mind is that of a stooped peasant, defeated and demoralized by collectivization. When the revolution came to his village, communist officials had raised his hopes by granting his family a plot of land and teaching him to write his name, but a few years later he was forced to join a commune and give most of the harvest to the state. He opposed collectivization at first, but as time passed he could only grumble, drag his feet, and stealthily swallow handfuls of unripened grain in the fields. He lived in constant fear that a neighbour or cadre would denounce him as a 'rich peasant' (Chinese: *funong*; Russian: *kulak*) who had concealed his true identity from the masses—knowing well that such a charge could lead to deportation or a bullet to the head. He was aware that living standards were far higher in the cities, but restrictions on migration put such a life out of his reach.

These images reflect many villagers' experiences during the twentieth century. Much of the archival and oral history research of the past thirty years has confirmed the grim descriptions penned by anti-communist Cold Warriors. To focus exclusively on the very real trauma of collectivization, however, obscures many other parts of rural life. For villagers in communist societies, 'being rural' (living in the countryside, devoted to agriculture) and 'being alive' (eating, sleeping, playing, having sex) shaped everyday life at least as much as 'being communist' did. Villagers' overriding concerns about work and family were affected, but not necessarily defined, by communist policies and collective organizations. People in villages fell in love, got married, had children, and

had extramarital affairs. Their lives were drastically changed, for better and for worse, by electricity, pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and tractors. As sociologist Richard Madsen reminds us in his description of the Chinese countryside, it is unwise to draw black-and-white conclusions about how communism transformed rural lives: 'Most changes that must have seemed good to many peasants were intertwined with changes that must have seemed bad.'[2]

Western studies of rural societies under communism published between the 1950s and 1980s were often Cold War axe-grinders stuck in the mode of good versus bad, seeking either to praise or condemn collectivization. Such approaches have had staying power: recent works about the Chinese countryside, for example, range from Frank Dikötter's damning portrayal of China's descent 'into hell' to Dongping Han's uncritical celebration of rural development and educational advances during the Cultural Revolution.[3] The more scholars argue about whether collectivization—and, by extension, communism as a whole—was terrible or great, the further we get from understanding the complexity and diversity of lived experience. Cold War-style polemics often contain valuable data, but on the whole their ideological agendas disrespect and dehumanize rural people by flattening their complicated lives into caricatures of victims or heroes.

Better, then, to avoid the temptation to judge rural life under communism as good or bad. Sometimes it was both good and bad, and sometimes it was neither, we find, when we ask what villagers were doing day to day in the fields, in the milking barn, and under the sheets. This chapter focuses on work, family, and technology and explores how different land and labour arrangements, from communes where peasants earned work points to cash-earning private farms, shaped rural lives in communist societies from Albania to Vietnam.

Working and Surviving in Collectives

When communists came to power in Russia and China, they took control of vast hinterlands where subsistence farmers struggled for survival without the benefit of electricity, machines, and irrigated fields. Peasants sold their labour and rented fields from landowners in ways that looked unacceptably exploitative to Marxist revolutionaries, even though most landlords themselves were only a few bad harvests or bandit raids away from abject poverty. The most pressing question for communist leaders concerned about peasant problems was how to eradicate rural exploitation while also modernizing the countryside. Most communist regimes across the globe during the twentieth century arrived at a single answer: the collectivization of agriculture.

Many communist countries pursued collectivization, which promised to increase production through large-scale, mechanized farming, because the Soviet Union had done it first in 1929 and 1930. Stalin's intensely violent 'war against the peasantry'[4] was

a blueprint but not a straitjacket for other countries that, with the benefit of hindsight, adjusted the pace of change and adapted to unique national circumstances.

When the tsarist regime fell in Russia in February 1917, many peasants seized land and became independent producers. The Bolsheviks endorsed these land seizures, but they squandered rural support by implementing onerous grain requisitions. During the 1920s peasants and Soviet power arrived at an accommodation called the New Economic Policy (NEP), which allowed farmers to work the land without having to hand over huge portions of the harvest to the state.

Agriculture during the NEP years—and the amount of grain the state was taking in—did not fuel the quick industrial development that Stalin had hoped for. Rapid, coercive collectivization was his solution. In late 1929 and early 1930, teams of communist and youth league activists pushed peasants to join the kolkhoz (equivalent in practice to a 'collectivized village'[5]) and expropriated property from people categorized as kulaks. Anyone who refused to join the kolkhoz was threatened with being labelled an anti-Soviet kulak, subject to deportation or worse. Violence swept the countryside as villagers resisted the seizure of their livestock and land.

In March 1930, Stalin criticized the 'excesses' of forcing peasants to join collectives and seizing all of their livestock, but the die had been cast. The former rural elite no longer had influence or property, and for the rest of the peasants there was no viable alternative to joining a kolkhoz, other than permanently leaving the village. Between 1929 and 1932, one out of four peasants opted out of collective agriculture by seeking a wage-paying job in a city or on a state farm.[6]

Soviet collectivization was especially brutal because it paired dekulakization with the establishment of kolkhozy. In China, the two processes were separate. Rural support for the Chinese Communists was based in part on the party's bestowal of private property to peasants. During land reform in the 1940s and early 1950s, each household was given a class label (poor peasant, middle peasant, rich peasant, or landlord) based on the family's economic situation three years before the Communists took over the village. Communist work teams redistributed landlord property and mobilized villagers to denounce, beat, and kill landlords and their family members. Hundreds of thousands were executed. During the 1950s, the party steadily advocated deeper and more complex forms of cooperation, first in mutual aid societies and later in larger cooperatives where peasants pooled their labour, land, livestock, and tools, and shared the profits based on how much they had put in.

Communist leaders in China, like their counterparts in Eastern Europe, had heated debates about the pace of collectivization and the ideal size of the organization—should it be based on a natural village, or include multiple settlements? Mao Zedong opted for bigger units and faster changes. In 1955, Mao criticized cautious officials for 'tottering along like a woman with bound feet and constantly complaining, "You're going too fast"'.[7] By mid-1956, most Han peasants had been put into collectives with an average size of approximately 1,200 people, much larger than the lower-level cooperatives that had been established in the early 1950s (ethnic minority regions like Tibet were on a slower timeline). Mao, elated that collectivization had been accomplished without the

clashes and disruptions that had accompanied the process in the Soviet Union, went even further in 1958, calling for a Great Leap Forward that would rapidly increase harvest yields by merging collectives into huge communes.

Chinese communes encompassed multiple villages, and were meant to lead to a utopian amalgamation of agriculture and industry. The leap was a catastrophic failure that resulted in tens of millions of deaths (see Felix Wemheuer's chapter in this volume), but communes stuck around as an organizational unit until the early 1980s, and even longer in the peasant vernacular. On my visits to the north Chinese countryside in the early twenty-first century, older rural people still referred to the nearest township as the 'commune' (*gongshe*) and to their own village as a 'brigade' (*dadui*).

Mao probably nodded with approval and familiarity at the quick, large-scale collectivization pursued by communist parties in Albania, Bulgaria, North Korea, Romania, and Vietnam during the 1950s—and also in Pol Pot's Cambodia twenty years later—but land arrangements in other communist societies bore scant resemblance to Chinese communes or Soviet kolkhoz. Private landownership dominated in Poland and Yugoslavia because leaders there capitulated to villagers' unwillingness to join cooperatives. In Hungary, collectives were disbanded during the 1956 uprising. After Soviet troops put down the uprising, the Hungarian regime compromised with peasants, abolishing forced grain requisition, allowing cooperative members to sign sharecropping contracts, and permitting them to devote time to the private economy. Collectivization in the Lao People's Democratic Republic was also characterized by compromise and retreat. A drive to form cooperatives began in 1978 but was abandoned the next year in favour of 'market socialism' inspired by the Soviet Union's conciliatory approach of the 1920s.[8] Cuba, where land was primarily devoted to sugar production, was an entirely different story. Large sugar plantations were nationalized and sugar workers became state employees, and agrarian reform in 1959 granted land to 100,000 Cuban farmers.

Just as land arrangements varied widely between different communist societies, so too did typical workdays and ways of compensating rural people. Farm work and worries about the weather, harvest yields, and the health of livestock dominated villagers' waking hours much as they had before communists took over. But in a collective, work became more regimented and routinized. In one Russian village in the 1930s, a woman opposed to the kolkhoz derided what she called 'living by the bell . . . they get up by it, sleep by it, fight by it, and if anything should ever happen to that bell, they'd be more at a loss than little chickens which suddenly lose the old hen'.[9] The Russian woman may have been exaggerating, but actual bells were indeed part of collective life. In China's Shaanxi province, 'People were expected to report to the fields promptly at the ringing of a bell' twenty-eight days out of the month.[10] In another Chinese village, bells were less effective: one morning a team leader 'rang the bell for over an hour. When nineteen people did not show up, he had to go door to door.'[11]

Farm workers straggled at times because they knew how tiring and stressful dawn-to-dusk agricultural labour could be. Female milkers on Soviet collective farms near Lake Baikal worked an average of 13 hours and 43 minutes a day in the 1970s. Anthropologist Caroline Humphrey observed that the long hours and 'constant and daily calculability

of the milkmaid's product' were so anxiety-inducing that on one farm, 'Many of the women appeared at work irregularly, and most of them were heavy drinkers.' In order to allow for an occasional respite, the women covered for each other, milking their friends' cows and recording the amount milked in the co-worker's logbook.[12]

For some rural people, the camaraderie and togetherness of collective work took the edge off the exhaustion. 'You didn't even notice how fast time went by during the day,' one Romanian man said about working in a team. A Romanian woman explained why she preferred collective labour over private farming: 'If we'd just been working our own land it wouldn't have been as much fun because we would have been only a few kin, but here there were a lot more of us.'[13] Her counterparts in China agreed—one woman said that working side by side with peers was 'lively' and a welcome change from how 'nervous' she felt stuck at home with a strict mother-in-law.[14]

Figuring out how to compensate the hundreds of women and men completing various tasks on a typical workday was one of the most challenging and contentious aspects of rural life under communism. In Soviet kolkhozy in the 1930s, members earned labour-days based on the number of hours worked and the skill required to complete the job. After calculating the harvest and fulfilling the state grain quota, kolkhoz accountants would pay members, usually in kind but sometimes in cash, based on the number of labour-days they had accumulated that year. On average, kolkhozniks earned 197 labour-days in 1937, but some earned far more than others: 21 per cent of kolkhoz members received fewer than 51 labour-days, while 20 per cent earned more than 300.[15]

While other countries, most notably China, emulated the Stalinist practice of forcibly extracting grain from a hungry, poorly compensated peasantry, rural life in the Soviet Union changed considerably under Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev. In the Soviet countryside of the 1950s and 1960s, compulsory grain deliveries were halted, state investment in the agricultural sector increased, and rural people received pension benefits and fixed wages instead of earning labour-days. Average wages for collective farm workers increased by 311 per cent in real terms between 1953 and 1967.[16] Similar transformations occurred in Eastern Europe. In Hungary, cooperative members were earning hourly wages or monthly salaries by the late 1960s.[17]

On Chinese communes, rural people toiled for work points. Team members were awarded points based on complex norms. In the early 1950s, one village set seventy standards for such jobs as hoeing (how many rows per day), ploughing (dependent on soil hardness and the quality of draft animals), and hauling (based on distance and load). A few years later the same collective found that it had to establish norms for around 160 tasks.[18] As in the Soviet Union of the Stalin era, the number of annual points a rural Chinese household earned determined its share of the harvest after the collective had delivered grain to the state and deducted what the family had eaten during the year. This often led to vastly unequal incomes. In one north Chinese village in the 1970s, 'A household of seven with only one full-time laborer ended the year with no cash,' while a 'household of four, all of whom worked, earned 1000 yuan.'[19]

Inequality was built into the Chinese system in another way: men earned an average of ten points for a full day of work, while women received six to eight points. Men

and women, including female officials, saw this gap as natural. Farm work required strength, they explained, and men were stronger than women. Cao Zhuxiang, a rural labour model during the collective era, said, 'There were men to do the heavy work, so of course men earned more work points. Women's labor power was weaker, so they got fewer work points.'[20]

Other seemingly natural differences led to discrimination in awarding work points. When Chinese urbanites were resettled in villages during the Mao era, whether as sent-down youth who were supposed to temper themselves in the revolutionary countryside or as class enemies who had been deported for allegedly bourgeois crimes, they had no chance of earning a full day's points. Villagers saw the city people, many of whom were clueless about farm work, as a drain on scarce resources. Rural officials capped the outsiders' work points and grain allowances at the lowest possible level.[21]

Chinese commune members could complain about such unfairness, but they had no way to opt out of the system. In other communist societies where membership in a collective was not mandatory, disputes about work points could be decisive. A Laotian man named Kham Khiene dropped out of his cooperative in 1981 over an accounting discrepancy. He said that he had recorded 5,000 points in his own book, but that the cooperative had only awarded him 4,000. The cooperative offered to make up the difference, but Kham Khiene quit anyway, saying that he 'disliked the system', which was 'all right in theory . . . but not in practice'.[22]

Kham Khiene's distinction between ideals and practice is a useful way to think about how peasants coped with the burdens, indignities, and inequities of everyday life in a collective. Even in places where dropping out was not an option, rural people found creative ways to survive. In order to earn as many work points as possible, Vietnamese peasants dumped manure in big heaps instead of spreading it evenly in paddy fields. They also gleaned grain for themselves during processing and transport, appropriated collective land for household use, and stole fertilizer.[23] Villagers elsewhere in Asia and Europe justified theft from the collective, saying that they were merely 'taking' what had been expropriated from them. A common saying in Romania was that someone who did not 'steal from the state is stealing from his family'. One Romanian urged his family members to grab as many corn cobs as they could carry on the way home from the fields, 'because they took them from us anyway'.[24]

Transgressions were not limited to ordinary villagers—local officials also bent and broke rules. Common practices included under-reporting grain yields and hiding land in order to keep more of the harvest for the village. In Vietnam, provincial officials complained that land figures provided by cooperatives were 'inevitably less than the actual amounts'. False reporting was so widespread that it had become an 'art form' among local Vietnamese leaders.[25] In China, Chen Boda, a top leader closely associated with Mao Zedong, made a big deal of punishing a rural official for having concealed more than 80 acres of her village's land from the state during the early 1960s. The woman's arrest was publicized as a model for the rest of China to emulate. After the 1964 harvest, though, Chen discovered that grain from the 'black land' was the only thing preventing villagers from going hungry. He was forced to backtrack. In order to keep his model

afloat, Chen cancelled state requisitions from the hidden land for three years and quietly returned 85,000 kilograms of warehoused grain to the village.[26]

Some scholars have argued that hiding, lying, stealing, and shirking collective work in favour of private production pushed communist regimes to adjust and reform. Anthropologist Gerald Creed writes that Bulgarian villagers' everyday resistance 'forced concessions from central planners and administrators that eventually transformed an oppressive, intrusive system into a tolerable one'.[27] Similarly, scholars focusing on China and Vietnam argue that rural survival strategies, especially devotion to household plots, led to the downfall of collectives.[28] Others hold that it is naïve to celebrate desperate tactics as resistance, saying that daily disobedience actually extended the lifespan of communist regimes by smoothing over systemic irrationalities and inefficiencies.[29] Peasants themselves did not spend most of their time worrying about whether they were propping up or undermining communism. They were too busy trying to survive. They also had plenty of other important things on their minds: finding a spouse, having sex, and taking care of children.

Family and Sex

No communist regime came close to abolishing the family as the basic unit of rural society. On the contrary, in many countries communism unintentionally reinforced family identities by basing bureaucratic structures and taxonomies on households (instead of on individuals). The dual categories of class status (*jieji chengfen*) and family background (*jiating chushen*) were particularly salient in the daily lives of Chinese villagers. Class labels were assigned to families during land reform and were subject to revision during the upheavals of the Mao era. Children inherited their father's label, which did not necessarily reflect the family's actual economic condition—by the 1960s, politically favoured 'poor peasant' families were often better off than ex-landlords who had had their property expropriated. A family's state-assigned class status had a major impact on everyday life, subjecting millions of people marked as landlords, rich peasants, and counter-revolutionaries to episodic violence and daily discrimination.

Class labels could be especially important when it came to finding a husband or wife. Young Chinese villagers preferred mates who were strong labourers able to earn lots of work points, but they also had to consider prospective spouses' class status. In one village in northeast China in the 1970s, two men paid a steep price for marrying women from bad-class families: because their wives were potentially counter-revolutionary 'time bombs', the men were denied entry into the Communist Party and not allowed to become cadres. Other young villagers got the message and paid closer attention to class status when choosing a partner.[30]

In some instances, Asian villagers contested political labels in order to marry who they wanted. Pak Young-ho, a 30-year-old North Korean soldier, was desperate to find a wife in 1964. In advance of a scheduled leave from the army to visit his home village, Pak asked his older brother to help him search for a bride. Pak's quest was complicated

by the official *songbun* status system that divides society into 'core', 'wavering', and 'hostile' groups based on family background and loyalty to the regime—a taxonomy that remains in effect in the twenty-first century.

Pak's first prospective wife backed out after learning that his sister-in-law was the daughter of a former policeman during the Japanese occupation. After a second woman agreed to a match, the county party committee refused to grant approval on the grounds that Pak's sister-in-law was from a reactionary family. The Paks pushed back. They enlisted a friendly official to argue that it was unreasonable for Pak to be punished, 'since his blood had never been mixed' with his sister-in-law's. This reasoning was persuasive and the marriage was allowed to go ahead. A few days later Pak spent the night at his fiancée's home, where the couple had sex. Two days after that they were singing a duet at their wedding ceremony.[31]

Pak's decision to have sex before his wedding would not have shocked many rural dwellers in other communist societies. Lewd jokes and adultery in the fields were far more common than stereotypes of conservative peasants might suggest. Overt sexual play between men and women was a fun way to pass the time during collective farm work. Consider what Yunxiang Yan saw in a Chinese village when he was a political deportee during the mid-1970s:

> Several women threw a man on the ground who had used a sexual term that was particularly offensive and insulting to the women, literally breast-fed him, and finally put him under the open legs of a woman who was squatting on top of him, symbolizing the birth of this man.

The humiliated man 'ended up begging for forgiveness'.[32]

While women sometimes won confrontations in public, they were more vulnerable when male officials wielded political power to seek sexual favours. A village leader during the Chinese Cultural Revolution was rumoured to have had affairs with eight different women. One woman was the daughter of an 'ex-bandit' who had been labelled a counter-revolutionary. Another cadre in the same village had an adulterous relationship with a woman who was the niece of a counter-revolutionary. According to an observer, the women—and their husbands—accepted these affairs in exchange for protection from political persecution.[33] Relationships with party secretaries could shield villagers from violence during the turbulence of the Mao era. Similar practices took place in Europe. In a Romanian village, after the daughter of a *chiabur* (kulak) had sex with a cadre, the man told her family how to shed their bad-class label.[34]

Women from politically suspect family backgrounds were particularly vulnerable to abuses of power. So were women whose husbands had left the village for jobs in city factories or on public works projects. Such women often had difficulty earning enough work points to pay for their own grain. To make up the difference, they depended on village officials, or on their in-laws. Both options carried risks. One Chinese villager was completely out of contact from her husband for three years during the 1950s because her father-in-law secretly intercepted letters, keeping the money inside for himself. At night, she wove palm fibre rope in the dark to earn a few cents for 'pocket money, or in case my

child was ill'.[35] Other women who had more helpful in-laws were glad to benefit from their husbands' faraway jobs. I met a villager in north China who had lived apart from her husband for almost ten years during the 1950s. He finally left his city job and returned to the village in the aftermath of the Great Leap famine, but his wife said that she 'was not willing for him to come back' because the family depended on his remittances.[36]

Some Chinese women in the 1950s preferred separation from their husbands not for financial reasons, but because they did not get along. After a Chinese villager 'wore all her pairs of pants to bed to prevent her husband's sexual advances', she was granted a divorce. Another woman who did not want to sleep with her husband was convinced by an official to throw her pants out the window. The cadre, who hoped that forcing the couple to lie together naked would save their marriage, ended up having to heave the pants back through the window after the pair would not stop fighting.[37]

In communist Hungary, a different family dynamic pushed one couple to reunite even though doing so was financially costly. A woman who was working in a faraway steel factory left her job and moved back home in order to better regulate her husband's drinking. She was concerned that he was spending too much time in the village tavern. In the Hungarian village studied by anthropologist Martha Lampland, a successful peasant marriage was one in which the wife limited her husband to drinking between household tasks, rather than allowing him to get so drunk that he could not work at all.[38]

For families that overcame their troubles and stayed together, raising children to adulthood was one of the primary challenges of everyday life in villages under communism. The Maoist state encouraged Chinese women to have lots of babies. Beginning in the early 1950s, increasing numbers of children survived childbirth thanks to advances in 'new-style midwifery' promoted by the Communist Party. Historian Gail Hershatter has found that rural Chinese mothers, who were required to work for the collective during the day and still expected to complete housework at night, faced a deadly 'childcare crisis'.[39] During the Great Leap Forward, one woman remembered, 'You dared not stay at home' to care for children. 'If you stayed at home, your work points would be reduced.' Another villager recalled, 'I couldn't take care of my children … I tied them with a rope to the window frame.' Unsupervised children were vulnerable to accidents. In 1961 in Shaanxi province, 30 per cent of children between the ages of 1 and 5 'had no one to care for them at home', and more than 100 children 'had been bitten by wolves or drowned' during the busy summer harvest.[40]

Rural women who had experienced the exhaustion and stress of trying to raise eight, nine, or ten children during the 1960s and 1970s became proponents of China's one-child policy after it was implemented in the early 1980s. Birth restrictions in China coincided with the breakdown of collectives, but they depended on mobilization tactics and cadre evaluation methods honed during the Mao era. The one-child policy has had at least as significant an impact on the world's rural people as any other change introduced by a communist state during the twentieth century.

Restricting Chinese families to one child became official policy after military scientists using cybernetic population models won a debate against demographic researchers who wanted to continue the voluntary birth control campaigns of the 1970s.[41] Because local officials' chances for promotion were linked to whether they met birth rate quotas in their

jurisdictions, they were under pressure to prevent or terminate pregnancies by any means necessary, with or without a woman's consent. As part of what political scientist Tyrene White calls the 'truly massive' rural sterilization campaign of 1983, more than 16 million women and 4 million men were sterilized, almost 18 million women received IUDs, and over 14 million abortions were performed.[42] In 1983 in Xijia, a village in north-east China, 102 women underwent tubal ligation. Four were physically forced to the operating table when they tried to back out of the surgery, and many others remembered the 'anxiety, discontent, grief, and strong feelings of helplessness' that accompanied coercive sterilization.[43]

Although Communist Party officials were still forcing women to have third trimester abortions in some rural areas in 2012, China has gradually relaxed birth restrictions over the past twenty years. Families willingly pay fines in order to have two or three children. And in many Chinese provinces, rural families whose first child is a daughter are allowed to have a second baby. This rule has had the unintended consequence of exacerbating China's skewed sex ratio, which by 2007 had soared to more than 120 boys born for every 100 girls. Families who know that their second child represents their only chance to have a boy rely on illegal (but widely available) ultrasound exams to determine foetal sex, and then disproportionally abort female foetuses.[44] The absence of tens of millions of women who would have been born had it not been for the Chinese Communist Party's birth planning policies has deeply affected everyday life in the countryside in ways that will reverberate for decades.

No Chinese Communist leader ever sat down at a Politburo meeting and said, 'We must violently compel rural women to undergo sterilization and abortion, and while we're at it, let's get the sex ratio up to 120 boys per 100 girls born.' These troubling results were not what the architects of China's population policy had intended. The same can be said of many of the tragedies that communist regimes inflicted on rural people during the twentieth century. Nobody said, 'Now would be a good time for a famine that will kill more than 30 million peasants' or 'How about making people work in the fields from dawn until dusk while their children play unsupervised near dangerous rivers?' or 'Let's make stealing grain and lying about harvests a survival requirement in rural collectives'. Communist leaders never set out to make rural people miserable. Their goal was to build modern industrial nations free from exploitation. The countryside might have to pay a disproportionately steep price in pursuit of that goal, leaders reasoned, but such sacrifices were meant to be temporary.

Although communism in practice fell short of its goals in many different ways, in the area of modernization it achieved results closer to what top officials had hoped for. Technological innovations increased productivity in communist countries worldwide, bringing life-changing benefits—and also new dangers—to villages.

Technological Change

Imagine any Albanian village at the end of the Second World War. Now picture the same village forty-seven years later. The contrast is striking. When communists took power,

villages had no electricity, machines, pesticides, or chemical fertilizers. Barely any land benefited from irrigation. By the time communism fell in Albania in 1992, technology had increased agricultural yields and reshaped the lives of rural residents. Many of the changes took place during the first three decades of communist rule. By 1973, 56 per cent of arable land in Albania was irrigated (versus only 10.5 per cent in 1938). Chemical fertilizer use jumped from 5,200 tons in 1950 to 208,900 tons in 1973; pesticide use increased sixty-three-fold during the same period. By the 1970s, tractors, threshing machines, and combines had largely replaced draft animals.[45] Similarly momentous changes took place in other communist societies. By 1979 half of Cuba's sugar crop was cut by mechanized chopper harvesters, which replaced the old method of cutting and burning cane fields by hand.[46]

The Soviet Union was the first communist country to promote the benefits that technology could bring to rural areas. In the Soviet Union of the 1930s, tractors became a symbol for the promised advantages of large-scale collectives. Centralized Machine-Tractor Stations (MTS) were established throughout the countryside. According to official figures, 94 per cent of collective land benefited from MTS services by 1940. High costs and unreliable service, however, meant that horses were still more important than tractors in many parts of the Soviet Union.[47]

Almost fifty years later in Laos, collective managers desperately wanted tractors, but securing one was not easy. Moreover, the presence of a machine did not guarantee agricultural success. In the early 1980s, an ambitious Laotian cooperative leader hired an expensive tractor in an attempt to double crop during the dry season. The first crop went in too early and was damaged by cold weather, resulting in a rice yield that was only 42 per cent of what the cooperative had counted on. Demoralized by the debacle, some families dropped out of the cooperative.[48] Tractors could make a difference, but by themselves were not a cure-all.

Electricity was even more transformative than tractors. In addition to powering irrigation pumps and facilitating small-scale rural workshops, it changed routines inside the home. Electric lights and appliances allowed villagers to sew clothes, make shoes, and hold meetings at night; radio and loudspeaker networks connected them to events in the faraway capital. In many communist countries, rural electrification began in the 1950s, spread rapidly during the 1960s, and became ubiquitous—but not entirely reliable—by the 1970s.

Electricity and complex machinery offered opportunities for skilled, well-compensated work and, for some, a path out of the village. Mechanized crop production workers in one Hungarian cooperative earned almost double what those working with their hands did in 1976; mechanics at the fodder works had the highest annual earnings of all, making even more than administrators. Young Hungarians in the countryside aspired to become machine workers.[49] The same was true in China. Three women and two men from a brigade in Shanxi province were sent to a new power plant in 1957 to learn about electricity. They returned to their village to put up wires and install lights in peasant homes. The young electricians' new expertise eventually landed them permanent jobs in the provincial power department.[50]

Knowledge about electricity in rural China was in dangerously short supply, however, as networks of wires, substations, and transformers spread during the 1960s. Twenty-four people were killed by electricity in villages outside Beijing over the course of two months in 1964, including a 21-year-old man who walked into a low-hanging wire on his way to the privy at six in the morning. One day in June 1964, curious children touched a live wire that had fallen after a tractor crashed into a pole. A 4-year-old died and three other children were injured. Two months later, three teenage boys died and five others were injured after touching wires that had been left on the ground by careless electricity workers. The toll was so high because passers-by, unaware of the danger to themselves, used their bare hands to try to pull the first victims away from the wire.[51]

Putting speedy installation above safety and valuing the willpower of the masses over scientific expertise also tempered the benefits of other newly introduced technologies. Drilling wells, digging irrigation canals, and building dams increased yields in North Korea, Laos, and, according to one scholar, even in Cambodia under Pol Pot.[52] In China, waterworks helped many farmers overcome weather-related problems, but deeper and deeper well digging caused the water table to drop.[53] Substandard dam construction contributed to one of the worst disasters of the twentieth century, when in August 1975 more than fifty dams failed in Henan and Anhui after a typhoon stalled over central China. As many as 230,000 people died when torrents of water swept downstream from the collapsed dams.[54]

Technology could be deadly, but it was also energizing for young people who creatively used new equipment and methods to try to improve rural life. In 1970s China, at the same time that the overapplication of chemical fertilizers and pesticides polluted the environment and harmed human health, people threw themselves into agricultural experimentation with enthusiasm and found the experience greatly rewarding. Naihua Zhang was sent from her home in Beijing to a village in north-east China in 1969 at the age of 17. She spent a year at the brigade's experimental station, then led the village orchard, where she planted beans and vegetables between the fruit trees, and finally took charge of an experimental farm at the commune headquarters. Zhang felt proud that the orchard and commune experiments were successful. In retrospect, she attributes her achievements to the 'specific time and circumstances' of the late Mao Zedong era, which 'provided opportunities for us to engage in a variety of activities and made our experience fulfilling, enriching, and empowering'.[55]

Just as technology was a double-edged sword in Mao's China, simultaneously empowering and killing, the rural transformations attempted by communist regimes around the globe were magnificent in some ways and destructive in others. Naihua Zhang's energy and pride are reminiscent of the young women who so impressed Maurice Hindus during his visits to the Russian countryside in the early 1930s. Meeting Vera, a tireless 18-year-old milkmaid and livestock expert who was responsible for her village's cultural activities, prompted Hindus to observe 'what a double-armed power the Russian Revolution is: how on the one hand it stifles and on the other it redeems personality'.[56]

Conclusion: Villages versus Cities

Vera may have been redeemed by communism, but she was not content to stay in her village indefinitely. Her dream was to study in Moscow. And as much as Naihua Zhang valued her time in the Chinese countryside, she did not want to live there for ever. She left to attend an urban university in 1977. These details are just as telling as the women's fervent pursuit of agricultural advances. They do not mean that their enthusiasm for rural work was anything but genuine. But when given a choice, the women wanted out. When we compare the everyday challenges of village life under communism with what urbanites experienced, the rural sphere looks more stifling than redeeming.

During the Mao era, when foreign visits to the Chinese countryside were limited to model villages where almost everyone seemed as happy as Vera, many Western scholars assumed that Chinese villagers were better off than Soviet peasants had been under Stalin. After rural fieldwork became possible in the late 1970s and early 1980s, scholars discovered that rural China had been squeezed to breaking point in order to support urban industry.[57] Mao had promised to eliminate the 'three great differences' (between industry and agriculture, city and countryside, and mental and manual labour), but the rural–urban divide actually worsened between the 1950s and 1970s. Rural people ate less food and earned less money than city people, who enjoyed guaranteed grain rations, fixed monthly salaries, and better hospitals, schools, and infrastructure. China's household registration (*hukou*) system, which split the population into 'self-sufficient' agricultural households and state-supported urban ones, was more effective at restricting rural-to-urban migration than the Soviet internal passport system was.

Chinese peasants found it nearly impossible to survive in cities during the Mao years because rural *hukou* holders had no access to the grain coupons that allowed urban residents to buy food in shops and restaurants. In other communist countries where prohibitions against migration were less severe, villagers chose to exit in large numbers. In Bulgaria, for example, the urban population grew from 27.6 per cent in 1950 to 62.1 per cent in 1980.[58] Those left behind disparaged the migrants. 'They run away from the work,' one Bulgarian villager said of people who left the countryside, 'They are lazy and do not want to work hard. That, in a word, is why they leave.' An urban woman whose grandfather still lived in the village saw it differently: 'I did not go to school and study in order to dig.'[59] These voices are seemingly in conflict, but they agree on one fundamental point about rural life: it was hard.

Notes

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CHAPTER 27

WORKERS UNDER COMMUNISM: ROMANCE AND REALITY

TUONG VU

Introduction

Workers are glorified in Marxist thought. Associated with advanced capitalist production, they are yet impoverished and alienated by it and thus have an interest in overthrowing capitalism and building a society free of exploitation and oppression. Where workers were drawn into revolutionary movements against capitalism, their relation to the regimes that claimed to represent their interests was fraught with tension from the start, even in the Soviet case where there was significant support among the small working class for the revolution of October 1917. Such tension was due in part to the chaotic post-revolutionary conditions that created considerable hardship for workers, and in part to the need of communist regimes to create the industrial base that Marx had supposed would pre-exist socialist revolution by depressing wages in favour of investment. Moreover, the fact that the communist regimes generally took industry into state ownership meant that worker dissatisfaction with poor working conditions tended to be directed against the government, notwithstanding their claim to be workers' states.

As communist states matured, their relationship with workers settled into an uneasy mutual dependence. Workers depended on the state for employment and frequently also for housing and food, while state enterprises counted on them to fulfil plans to modernize the economy. Although millions of workers experienced upward social mobility either by moving from agriculture into industry or by being promoted into managerial positions within industry, the majority of workers, especially women, remained in low-paid, low-skilled jobs. The romance of workers being the masters of the socialist workplace increasingly contradicted the reality that trade unions were weak and subject to party control and legal rights to protest were non-existent. However,

workers enjoyed some latitude in the labour process, often able to impose their own rhythm of work and to resist the state's drive to raise productivity and improve the quality of output. Politics in the workplace was complex and varied over time and across countries. A minority of workers—sometimes large—believed in socialism and enthusiastically supported the state in its drive for rapid industrialization. Collective protests were rare, although they did occur, usually motivated by economic grievances rather than demands for political freedom. Communist regimes celebrated the working class and, to some degree, workers were privileged compared to the peasantry; but in reality, though they came to enjoy social and economic security in developed socialist societies, they were far from being major beneficiaries of socialism.

This essay compares the experiences of workers under communism in the Soviet Union, Poland and East Germany, China and Vietnam. The literature is richest for the Soviet Union, but since the 1990s new archival sources and other materials have become available for all communist countries. First, the essay examines the early formation of state–labour relations that occurred in the context of war mobilization, the nationalization of industries, and the implementation of key socialist economic programmes such as collectivization and forced industrialization. What transpired in this period often cast a long shadow over the life course of communist regimes. The second section turns to the factory environment to analyse the authority structure governing the shopfloor and the behaviour of workers. In the conclusion, I will suggest how the study of workplace politics helps us understand the contradictions of communism and its eventual failure to provide an alternative to capitalism.

The Making of Socialist Workforces

All communist regimes emerged either from revolution or war. Some, such as the Soviet Union, China, and Vietnam, became embroiled in new wars shortly after their establishment. Workers' support for communism varied from fairly strong (the Soviet Union) to fairly weak (China) to non-existent (Eastern Europe, North Vietnam). While workers often welcomed the revolutions that were ostensibly on their behalf, their relationship with revolutionary governments was tense and occasionally violent. This was due not only to the fact that war and revolution produced economic strain and sometimes chaos, with pressure on living standards and desperate efforts to increase productivity, but also to the fact that most regimes moved quickly to take privately owned industry into state control, thereby making the regime the target for working-class disaffection. Over time, the massive expansion of the workforce that took place with rapid industrialization enabled communist states to shape its overall character; yet workers were far from being passive and submissive in the process.

In the Soviet Union, the First World War and the turbulence of 1917 had disastrous effects on the economy. The working class shrank as factories closed down, as workers returned to the villages, and as workers were recruited into the Red Army. The number

of workers in Moscow fell from 190,000 in 1917 to only 81,000 by early 1921.[1] The loss of skilled workers, who had often been the Bolsheviks' strongest supporters in 1917, was particularly acute. Worker support for the Bolsheviks soon began to ebb in spring 1918, as economic conditions deteriorated. Workers took factories under their control in an attempt to keep them functioning; some were nationalized but many closed down. During the civil war (1918–21), there were severe shortages of food and fuel and the new government sought to curb labour turnover and intensify labour discipline. Workers' productivity plummeted, falling to 25 per cent of the 1913 level by 1919.[2] The government limited the autonomy of factory committees and trade unions, and sought to move to one-person management of factories, albeit with trade-union involvement. Trotsky's attempts to put key sectors under military discipline backfired. By spring 1921, there was an upsurge in worker discontent at continuing food shortages, abuses in the ration system, attempts to curb the independence of trade unions, and growing hostility to Bolshevik repression. Coinciding, as it did, with widespread peasant rebellion and the uprising by sailors at Kronstadt in March 1921, popular dissent forced the Bolsheviks to abandon grain requisitioning from the peasantry and labour militarization.

By the mid-1920s, economic recovery was under way but unemployment was rising as a result of demobilization of the Red Army, rural migration to the cities, and government efforts to rationalize production.[3] Workers made some gains, as average real wages struggled to reach the pre-war levels and the average workday decreased to 7.5 hours from 10 hours in 1913.[4] The emergence of food shortages in the cities in 1927–8, however, convinced Stalin that a mammoth effort to industrialize the country was necessary, which must be financed through the collectivization of agriculture. The First Five-Year Plan (1928–32), called for a 77 per-cent increase in industrial output, later upgraded to a 145 per-cent increase, to be achieved in four years.[5] The sharp rise in demand for labour attracted to the cities millions of peasant migrants who fled the collective farms. About 23 million Soviet peasants moved to the cities during 1926–39, but labour shortage remained a serious problem until the mid-1930s. The massive entrance of young and unskilled peasants into the workforce led to high turnover and low productivity. Worker living standards declined throughout the 1930s. The labour unrest that had continued in the 1920s, albeit at a lower level than in the civil war, began to tail off in the 1930s as draconian labour discipline was enforced, although as late as 1932 there was a wave of strikes in the Ivanovo Industrial Region.[6] Yet urban life was still better for the millions of new workers who were former peasants. Many of them could take advantage of new educational opportunities and socialist competition campaigns to advance their status.[7]

A different situation existed in East Germany and Poland, as well as in most of Eastern Europe. Prior to the war industrial development was relatively advanced in East Germany and there was a large and disciplined working class. Amid the chaos left by war hungry workers roamed the countryside looking for food and failed to show up for work. Pre-Nazi workplace councils were revived in thousands of enterprises, through which workers seized control of enterprises to create better working conditions, to take revenge on former Nazis, or simply to protect their sources of income as food became scarce. The Soviet occupation government at first neglected industrial production, but

changed its policy when economic conditions worsened at the beginning of the Cold War in 1947. The new policy, which amounted to the full transfer of Soviet-style labour regime to East Germany, included measures to improve welfare and working conditions together with incentives to strengthen discipline and boost productivity. A socialist competition movement was launched, modelled after similar campaigns in the Soviet Union. The government also sought to strengthen its control over workplace councils through communist party organizations in enterprises. While workers welcomed wage rises and better working conditions, they resisted the attempt to restore piecework and wage differentials linked to work norms, viewing these measures as part of a Russian scheme to exploit Germany. The proportion of the labour force on piecework thus increased very slowly, and generally wages rose faster than productivity.[8] The open border with West Germany and the shortage of skilled labour made it difficult for enterprises to enforce discipline. If pressed too hard, skilled workers could simply flee to the West.

In 1952, East German leaders began the collectivization of agriculture and industrialization as part of a comprehensive programme of socialist construction. Increased investment in heavy industry and defence was to be financed by tax hikes and cuts in social services and consumption.[9] Workers' living standards deteriorated rapidly as a result, even though workers fared better than other groups such as farmers and artisans. As prices rose, goods disappeared from stores. The Socialist Unity Party (SED) government ordered enterprises to enforce discipline more rigorously and to raise work norms by 10 per cent. This was the context in which workers' protests erupted on 17 June 1953 and spread to 272 cities and towns across East Germany. Soviet tanks brought the country under control, but SED leaders were forced to make quick concessions to defuse the tension: the new norms were rescinded and the government thereafter consistently spent more on consumer goods and social welfare. At factory level the trade unions, controlled by the SED at central level, often colluded with worker demands. By the 1960s, workers were over-fulfilling 'slack' norms by an average 160 per cent.[10] The revolt of 1953 cast a long shadow over labour policy, and SED leaders were ever careful to avoid similar unrest.

Poland was much less industrialized than East Germany and suffered the loss of nearly one-third of its population and 65 per cent of its industrial plants as a consequence of the war.[11] Following Soviet occupation in mid-1944, in a desperate economic situation, workers took over many enterprises that had been under Nazi control or private ownership. By 1949 the economy began to stabilize, with wages rising and production of basic industrial goods returning to pre-war levels. But inflation soared in 1947 in part because of bad weather, triggering an open clash between communists and socialists over economic policy and political issues. The communists had initially supported the factory councils but, as they established their monopoly of power, merged the councils into a trade-union apparatus under party control. The socialists opposed this move but were neutralized through the arrest of their leaders. With industry in state ownership by 1947, the Polish Workers' Party found itself increasingly the target of worker disaffection. Proud of being Polish and Catholic, workers condemned factory managers and

party officials as 'Germans,' 'Nazi collaborators', or 'Jews'.[12] Lacking popular support, the communist regime was forced to seek an accommodation with the working class and, as in East Germany, it did so by tolerating low levels of productivity and by subsidizing food prices and rents. The wave of working-class unrest eased in the course of 1948, as the communist regime, by now entrenched, cut prices by 20 per cent and raised wages nearly 40 per cent. But real income was still one-third below its pre-war level.[13]

The death of Stalin in 1953 encouraged calls for Poland to develop a form of socialism independent of the Soviet model. In the wake of Khrushchev's 'secret speech' in 1956, which exposed the horrors of Stalinism, workers in Poznań on 28 June 1956 went on strike against new work quotas, for higher wages and lower food prices. The armed forces and security police unleashed brutal repression, killing scores and arresting hundreds. The political crisis that ensued led to the marginalization of hard-line Stalinists in the party leadership and the appointment of Władysław Gomułka as first secretary of the Polish Workers' Party. He sought a more conciliatory relationship with society, the independent workers' councils that had appeared during the uprising, for example, being tolerated until 1958 when the management prerogatives were restored.

In China and Vietnam, in contrast to Eastern Europe, communists came to power through popular revolutions, but in neither case did workers play a prominent role in the overthrow of the old regime. Both countries were far less industrialized than Russia in 1917 so the working class was tiny. In China the Communists did not encourage class conflict between workers and capitalists, calling during the civil war (1946–9) with the Nationalists (Guomindang) for 'mutual benefits for labour and capital'. When the Communists took Shanghai in 1949 workers were organized to protect factories, public offices, and schools against destruction by the departing Guomindang army and to restore production. Nevertheless worker expectations ran high and between June 1949 and May 1950 nearly 4,000 disputes and strikes broke out in the city, an unprecedented number.[14] The immediate problem facing the new government was to stabilize the economy and revive production. To curb hyperinflation, stringent monetary and fiscal policies were implemented which led to lay-offs and closures. In private industry cooperation between workers and employers was encouraged through labour-capital consultative committees, which proved successful in resolving disputes. In industries that had passed into ownership of the Nationalist government, which employed about 750,000 workers and accounted for one-third of output, a 'democratic reform movement' led to increased power for workers through the factory management committees, which comprised equal numbers of representatives of the administration and employees, plus directors and technicians. In December 1951 there were worried reports that workers were indulging in 'extreme democratic phenomena'.[15] Trade unions were given responsibility for social welfare in 1951, but veteran communist Li Lisan, the minister of labour, was dismissed for 'syndicalism', having advocated powers for the unions in the workplace that party leaders thought excessive.

The outbreak of the Korean War (1950–3) threatened China's fragile economy and, like the grain crisis in the Soviet Union in 1928, radicalized leaders' plan for a revolution in the economy. Labour restraint was now replaced by labour mobilization as

political campaigns against employer corruption got under way, the goal being ultimately to nationalize their enterprises. The 'Democratic Reform Campaign', launched in 1951, allowed workers to vent their spleen against their bosses. Simultaneously a series of more violent political campaigns attacked capitalists, managers of private enterprises, and those related to the vanquished republican government. By the end of 1956, nearly all privately owned enterprises had been brought into 'joint ownership' with the government.

The First Five-Year Plan (1953–7), like its Stalinist prototype, focused on building a heavy industrial base and led to more than a doubling of industrial output. Wages were kept very low in order to allow for maximum investment in industrial expansion, but welfare benefits and social insurance were relatively generous, sometimes amounting to as much as 80 per cent of the money wage. Workers in the state-owned sector, who comprised around 40 per cent of the workforce, were organized into work units (*danwei*) which distributed housing, foodstuffs, furniture, and other goods; ran nurseries, schools, and health clinics; carried out social and political campaigns; and approved marriages, divorces, adoptions, passports, and visa applications. Beneath these state employees were workers in the collective sector, which was created by combining formerly private workshops into cooperatives usually run by towns, counties, or municipalities; these were not paid according to state pay scales and were not fully covered by insurance or welfare. Beneath them, at the bottom of the pile, were workers employed on a temporary basis in state enterprises who received only limited insurance and benefits. In 1956 to 1957 more than 30,000 workers went on strike in Shanghai, mainly those left out of the new *danwei* system. The cleavage between the minority of state-enterprise employees who enjoyed an 'iron rice bowl' and the rest of the workforce had no parallel in other communist countries.

Despite the strike wave, economic conflict appears to have been limited. Workers' involvement in political campaigns, however, was a staple feature of Chinese communism. Popular support for the Great Leap Forward (1958–60), which was essentially a leap away from the Soviet model that had been influential up to this point, seems to have been widespread in town and countryside. Workers strove to achieve new records of output, but the result was to bring industry to its knees, as costs spiralled, waste of labour and raw materials reached eye-watering proportions, and productivity plummeted. From 1960 industry underwent a contraction of a magnitude almost equal to the expansion of 1958. In the wake of the disaster, the 29 million peasants who had flooded into industry were forcibly sent back to their villages. Thereafter, in contrast to the Soviet Union, industrial employment became unusually stable, with low turnover of workers in state- and collectively-owned industry.

In North Vietnam the communist government established in 1954 inherited a large portion of industrial enterprises owned by foreign companies. Both management and workers were retained but placed under government direction. As in China, the new government encountered problems of economic chaos and labour disturbances in privately owned enterprises.[16] Within the first year, Hanoi witnessed nearly 700 labour disputes and strikes, in part because workers responded to new, progressive labour

regulations issued by the government to win their support. Acting under Chinese guidance, Vietnamese communists also promoted consultation and cooperation between workers and owners and were cautious about implementing material improvements. Yet food shortages and inflation in the cities in late in 1956 prompted tighter regulations on private trade and the launch of 'capitalist reform'. By 1960 all privately owned enterprises had become nominally 'jointly owned', but were in fact under full state control. This transfer of ownership occurred four years after the same event in China but did not lead to protests as it did in China. Yet the North Vietnamese state was never able to engineer rapid industrial growth as occurred in China, in part because of the war in South Vietnam in the 1960s. Neither was there large-scale rural–urban migration nor high urban unemployment.

The food shortages and inflation in 1956 caused a deterioration of discipline and productivity in many state enterprises and construction sites. Many workers quitted their jobs or simply declined to work for wages that had lost value. The government responded by ordering a wage reform and a new system of enterprise accounting by which enterprises were permitted to retain some profits if production exceeded state plans. In 1958, North Vietnamese leaders switched strategy again, impressed by the Great Leap Forward, launching a campaign for management reform that sought to strengthen party leadership in enterprises and to raise workers' political loyalty. The latter was to be achieved through political education and a new mechanism of 'production groups' designed to encourage workers' participation in managing the enterprise. Labour reports indicated an emerging hierarchy in which workers were assigned to political categories that each carried differential benefits. A divergence between state and non-state sector workers also emerged in North Vietnam in the 1960s, with the former enjoying job security, better welfare benefits, and urban residency that offered advantages in childcare and educational opportunity. This hierarchy was enforced by strict household registration systems that prevented rural migration and protected the position of state workers.

Socialist Workers and Workplace Politics

The experiences of workers varied widely over time and across communist countries. The bright vision of socialism, described in the following verse taken from Soviet propaganda in 1930, must have excited many:

> Brigade of shock workers form platoons!
> Brigade of shock workers form ranks!
> Look! Around us rise factories
> And smoke is visible from new blast furnaces…
> I hear with each blow of the hammer
> Catch up, catch up, and…surpass![17]

The daily life of a typical worker in the barracks that popped up in numerous new towns at the same time was much less inspiring:

> Kuznetsov lived with about 550 others, men and women, in a wooden structure about 800 feet long and fifteen feet wide. The room contained approximately 500 narrow beds, covered with mattresses filled with straw or dried leaves. There were no pillows or blankets. Coats and other garments were being utilized for covering. Some of the residents had no beds and slept on the floor or in wooden boxes. In some cases beds were used by one shift during the day and others at night…I could not stay in the barracks for very long. I could not stand the stench of kerosene and unwashed bodies. The only washing facility was a pump outside. The toilet was a rickety, unheated shanty, without seats.'[18]

This description of a Soviet worker and his working conditions was made by an American worker who had gone to work in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s.

For manual workers, the story of socialist construction was one of sweat and hard labour, as described by a union cadre who visited a coal mine in Hong Gai, North Vietnam, in 1957:

> At an open-pit mine we visited, it was raining on and off but workers had to keep on working to achieve their target. Their clothes were soaked, dried, then soaked again, from 5 am to 3 pm, but they were able to fill only 16 trucks, or six short of their assigned target. This meant they would have to work until 5 pm…. The long workday makes many workers tired but they dare not take a day off for fear of criticism…. For the workers at Coc 6 who live six kilometers away in Cam Pha, their typical day begins at 3 or 4 am and does not end until 5 or 6 pm, taking into account their commuting time.[19]

By the 1960s in East Germany, which had the most advanced industrialized economy in the Soviet bloc, socialism came very close to its ideals, as shown in the following recollection of a former female supervisor at the Chemiefaserwerk (CFW) in Premnitz. This factory, which produced artificial silk, was located in a rural area and did not enjoy any particular political connections to the centre.

> When I came to the CFW in 1964, this was still a self-sufficient world. There were 7500 employees. The factory maintained a nursery (garden centre), a butcher, a piggery, a hospital, two dentists, a laundry, childcare facilities, cultural centres, sports facilities, a large accommodation block for apprentices, a school for vocational training, a library, a bath house, five canteens and so on…The CFW had flats [for its employees] and financed almost all sporting and social initiatives for the town of Premnitz…Within our family, we talked a lot about the CFW even after work…. In the nearly 30 years that we worked at the CFW together, work and private life were often indistinguishable. It was not just 'earning money', it was life.[20]

Although material conditions and corresponding living standards were radically different from East Germany to China, socialist workplaces in most contexts shared a common structure of domination and particular forms of politics. These shared structure and forms of politics explain the similar dynamics of workers' relationship to communist states. The structure of domination included three main pillars: ideology, organization, and hierarchical classification.

Ideologically, the communist party devoted enormous resources to motivating the working masses and to propagating a romanticized view of workers, work, and the workplace. Workers comprised a special group to which history assigned the noble mission of burying capitalism and building socialism. Through each unit of output, workers contributed to building a new and prosperous society free from exploitation. Work was defined as a civic obligation of every citizen in the new socialist republic. By producing material goods useful for human society, work infused people with moral rectitude and was not just a means of survival. The workplace was represented not as a place where workers sweated but as a 'palace' where the new 'masters' of society exercised their 'glorious' rights and duties. Even hard labour was considered not so much as a punishment but as a means by which people who had committed the sin of crimes against the collective could redeem themselves.[21] State-owned media invested huge resources into propagating ideology. Systematic ideological training was part of the school curriculum for all ages, including vocational schools. All workers needed to be taught not just industrial skills but also political literacy, understood as belief in socialism and loyalty to the party. The curriculum for a typical engineering course of study in East Germany included 300 hours of training in Marxism-Leninism, second only to mathematics (352 hours), but more than the class time devoted to engineering.[22] Ideological education went beyond the classroom. A common technique used in China at the height of Great Leap Forward and in Vietnam in the late 1950s was the study session which required workers to assemble regularly over weeks or even months to listen to speeches about current political campaigns, world developments, the differences between socialism and capitalism, and actively to relate their own experiences as workers to national and international developments. Comparing China to the Soviet Union, Walder notes the 'utter seriousness with which the Chinese party undertook to educate, resocialize, monitor, and transform the thinking of the masses of workers'.[23] He believes that in Maoist China the political education of workers was a goal as important as that of promoting production.

So far as the second pillar of organization was concerned, a dense set of organizations governed industrial relations at the enterprise level. The administration consisted not only of the director and managerial and technical staff, but also the communist party, its mass organizations, and the security apparatus. Party organizations performed ideological education, oversaw socialist competition, conducted political recruitment, made personnel decisions, and ensured that production served the political goals of the central party leadership. The mass organizations included the trade unions which had a dual function, as vehicles to represent workers' interests and to administer certain welfare benefits, and as 'transmission belts' that mobilized members to carry out

party policies. In practice, the latter trumped the former function. About 97 per cent of all employed persons in East Germany were members of the Free German Trade Union Federation, which was typical among socialist countries.[24] More restrictive in their membership were communist youth organizations (the Komsomol in the Soviet Union, the Free German Youth in East Germany, the Vanguard Youth in Vietnam), and the women's associations. All these organizations were led directly by the party at the relevant level.

The security apparatus formed the last set of management organizations. All socialist states employed secret police and networks of informants to maintain surveillance over the people, including workers. Part of their job was to deal with political provocation and suspected sabotage, but the other part was to maintain close daily monitoring of the workplace, especially workers' political attitudes and relationships, through a network of secret informants who spied on their fellow co-workers. In countries such as China an important tool of the security apparatus was the dossier system that kept files on every worker, including available details on their family and class backgrounds, work histories, and political and social relationships. These files followed individuals wherever they went for all their lives.

The third pillar of control related to the systems of hierarchical classification. Through censuses, passports, and the dossier system, class categories were assigned to families and individuals.[25] In terms of the official representation of communist society, the working class was the most favoured social group, sometimes followed by the poorer strata of the peasantry or collective farm workers, followed by the intelligentsia or, where they existed, the 'middle peasants'. At the bottom of the hierarchy were 'petite bourgeoisie', 'bourgeoisie', and 'landlords'. In the Soviet Union in the 1920s, people with 'good' class backgrounds were given priority access to higher education, membership in the Komsomol and the Communist Party, and other benefits. Those with 'bad' class backgrounds could be denied housing and services and often suffered political disenfranchisement. Overall, the structure of state domination was both extensive and intrusive. It encompassed material and cultural life. It was embedded not only in the workplace but also in social and economic hierarchies.

How did workers perceive and interact with authorities? Were they ever able to maintain or develop a social identity autonomous from the state? The debate on these questions has been most extensive among Soviet labour historians, although the positions taken by each camp in Soviet studies enjoy support from historians studying other socialist states.[26] Early literature emphasized the totalitarian ambitions of communist states and projected an image of atomized workers as disempowered and submissive victims.[27] This is the baseline against which virtually all later studies argued. The debate has focused primarily not on the state but on workers. They have been portrayed in three analytically different but not mutually exclusive ways: as enthusiastic supporters, as adaptive opportunists, and as brave resisters/rebels. Socialist states had many supporters among workers. Most prominent among these are the heroes of socialist competition campaigns who were often ideologically committed. Soviet shock workers and Stakhanovites in the late 1920s and 1930s exceeded their output norms by high margins.[28]

In other countries model workers responded to the state's call for higher productivity, excelling at their jobs but often alienating their co-workers and even managers. They were often rewarded handsomely with material goods and political honours, so it is difficult to calculate the respective blend of conviction and self-interested calculation. But workers' support ran wider than that of these enthusiasts. In the Soviet Union the First Five-Year Plan opened up enormous opportunities for upward mobility for workers and members of other lower classes. Through extramural classes, through special workers' faculties, through affirmative action programmes to lower the entry requirements into higher education, the regime sought to create a loyal stratum of managers, technicians, and officials and to legitimize its claim to be abolishing privilege and creating equality. For these 'affirmative action' workers and former peasants, Sheila Fitzpatrick claims, the industrialization of the Soviet Union 'was an heroic achievement…and their promotion…was a fulfilment of the promises of the revolution'.[29] It was not simply their favoured status that made many workers believe in socialism. 'The generation that grew up in the 1930s took [the official ideology] to heart. Most memoirs about the period, including many written in emigration, recall the idealism and optimism of the young, their belief that they were participants in a historic process of transformation, their enthusiasm for what was called "the building of socialism", the sense of adventure they brought to it, and their willingness (at least rhetorical) to go off as pioneers to distant construction sites like Magnitogorsk and Komsomolsk on the Amur.'[30] A study of personal diaries written in the 1930s confirms that many Soviet citizens, including even those from politically disadvantaged backgrounds, truly believed in the justice and visions of the Soviet system and did not seek, or were unable to form, an identity autonomous from the state.[31] The phenomenon is not limited to the Soviet Union. In East Germany, where socialism was imposed by Soviet troops following the Second World War, most people by the 1970s had come to accept socialist values and norms and expected that the political elites would conform to them.[32]

Regardless of whether workers believed in socialism, most sought if possible to avoid, or at least to accommodate, the demands of the regime, rather than to resist them openly. The calculations involved in this operated at multiple levels, depended on context, and shifted over time. In public settings, it was not necessary for workers to believe in socialism, but it was often necessary to 'speak Bolshevik', to 'participate as if they believed'. As Kotkin argues, 'beyond merely calculating what they had to gain or lose, people made their individual compacts with the regime's ambitions, adopting them in whole or, more often, in part, having little else to guide their thoughts and actions and remaining prone to doubts and ambivalence'.[33]

At the level of material life, conflict with the regime over work norms, worktime, benefits, housing, and scarce consumer items could be intense yet rarely flared up into revolt. This was because at the level of the shopfloor, workers had significant capacity to obstruct the aims of management.[34] This derived from the job security that workers enjoyed, managers under socialism being deprived of the ultimate weapon enjoyed by capitalists, namely, the right to fire workers. Central planning, moreover, created artificial labour shortages, so managements were reluctant to lose any labour, however poorly

motivated.[35] Moreover, as Soviet and Eastern European economies stabilized under political and resource constraints in the 1960s and 1970s, shopfloor dynamics shifted further in workers' favour. Most factory directors were now concerned simply to ensure that plan targets were met, even if this entailed semi-legal methods such as additional bonuses and false bookkeeping.[36] Managers learned to live with workers' rampant 'violations of labour discipline', such as absenteeism, drunkenness, and loafing, rather than try to crack down on them. Under such conditions only minimal effort was required of workers.

We saw that in 1956–7, workers in Shanghai engaged in strike action, but Andrew Walder argues that clientelism was the dominant mode of labour politics in China during the Mao era. In large state enterprises the party committee and its associated managerial hierarchy controlled distribution of goods, services, and career opportunities, and dispensed these preferentially to loyal clients. Party leaders and work-group leaders relied on a network of 'activist workers' whom they could trust in helping with production goals or with work-group management. These loyal workers were the principal recipients of material and symbolic rewards. But more generally, instrumental-personal ties created networks of loyalty and dependency among workers and employees more widely, which might centre on powerful individuals such as a shop director or party secretary. These networks highlighted the mutual dependence between workers and enterprise management as well as the tendency of workers to operate opportunistically.[37]

Workers' opportunistic behaviour was also evident in their participation in the second economy, which existed in every socialist country. Studies of Russian émigré families in the 1970s suggested that between 9 and 14 per cent of workers and employees in state enterprises performed private work, averaging about eleven hours a week per person.[38] These individuals earned 44 per cent of their total income from their private work. Other studies confirm a similar level of involvement of workers in state enterprises in the second economy elsewhere, especially in Poland, Hungary, and southern Soviet republics.[39] In the economy of communist North Vietnam in the late 1960s, collusion between state and non-state sectors and workers' participation in the black market was widespread. Such opportunistic behaviour was so pervasive that it may be interpreted as a form of low-level resistance to the party-state.

A deep cause of dissatisfaction in socialist states was workers' sense of alienation from their jobs due to their lack of autonomy in the production process.[40] This is a problem Marx had identified in capitalism, yet the problem was just as bad under socialism. The stagnation of socialist economies by the 1960s aggravated the sense of alienation. The rapid mobility observed in the 1930s in the Soviet Union and in the 1950s in Eastern Europe was a one-time transformation that could not be duplicated.[41] While the frame of reference for first-generation workers was harsh village life, the second or third generation who grew up in urban environments naturally expected much more, yet growth was slowing down in maturing socialist economies. While communist rhetoric touted workers as new masters, less than 20 per cent of Soviet workers participated in sociopolitical activities in the 1970s. Such participation brought a modestly higher wage and other material benefits but no upward mobility.

Workers' latent but deep frustration due to alienation and lack of upward social mobility did not directly cause protest. Rather, most protests were triggered by sudden rises in food prices or the build-up of economic grievances.[42] In Novocherkassk in June 1962, for instance, tens of thousands of workers marched on the streets to protest the steep increase in the prices of meat and butter and the tightening of output norms.[43] Dozens were killed when the military was sent in and seven workers were later executed. This was perhaps the largest incident of worker unrest in the Soviet Union between the early 1930s and before July 1989, when huge strikes broke out in Ukraine and western Siberia.[44] The strikes at the Gdańsk shipyard in Poland in December 1970 were similarly triggered by the announcement, two weeks before Christmas, of increases in the prices of essential consumer goods and the change in industrial wage scale.[45] Unrest quickly spread to nearby towns and even Warsaw, and involved tens of thousands of workers. Despite being violently suppressed, the strikes forced the ouster of Prime Minister Gomułka and the suspension of the price increases. Independent workers' organizations were maintained and led later strikes in 1972 and 1980, when Solidarity was founded.

In China, a different dynamic drove the wave of worker protests during the Cultural Revolution that were especially marked in Shanghai during winter 1966–7.[46] Some see worker politics as mirroring the factions within the student Red Guard movement, with 'conservative' workers' organizations made up of permanent state employees, defending local party and government authorities, and 'rebel' organizations mobilizing those with a grudge against the system, such as workers with 'bad' class labels, contract and temporary workers, or young apprentices.[47] Others suggest that both conservative and rebel organizations consisted mainly of permanent state employees. The Workers' General Headquarters, under the command of Wang Hongwen, was the principal rebel organization in Shanghai, consisting of young, relatively educated workers, with rather high proportions of party and Youth League members. These rebels stormed factory offices in search of files, dragged factory officials to mass denunciation meetings where they were publicly humiliated. By contrast, the leaders of the Scarlet Guards (*chiweidui*), the main conservative organization—which claimed at its peak 800,000 supporters—had all been party activists, 'labour models', 'advanced producers', although—to complicate matters—some with questionable dossiers enlisted on the conservative side to minimize risk. Despite the turbulence in factories in 1966–9, industrial relations changed little. The revolutionary committees that the Mao leadership gradually established created new forms of domination on the shopfloor in which patronage and demonstrations of political loyalty were critical.

Workers' experience under socialism varied widely over time and space. Nevertheless, all workers were subject to state-imposed forms of domination at the workplace and in society at large. This domination was the effect of a powerful ideology, dense organizations, and social hierarchies that were mutually reinforcing. Many workers actively supported communist goals and were rewarded, but they constituted a minority. The majority of workers were never passive followers: they learned to manipulate the system to protect their interests: either by appropriating the official rhetoric, or by everyday forms of resistance, or by cultivating personal-instrumental ties. Manipulation provided only

temporary relief but not an escape from the daily frustrations of communist societies, including the lack of individual freedom, alienation from work, declining real wages, severe shortage of consumer goods, and high levels of sectoral inequality in the Chinese and Vietnamese cases. These frustrations occasionally erupted in unrest. In general, it would be difficult to speak of there being class consciousness among workers, although Poland was an exception, since unrest fostered a workers' identity independent of the state and led to their bringing down the regime in 1989 with the help of dissident intellectuals and the Catholic Church.

Conclusion

The study of workplace politics under communist regimes suggests that three core elements together formed the character of communism in practice, namely its romantic, ambitious, and coercive tendencies: communist regimes propagated a romanticized view of workers, were driven by the ambition of burying capitalism, and exhibited a penchant for coercion and violence. Here in lay the central contradictions of the system. Workers were heroes in communist ideology yet were treated as mere instruments for the expansion of production. Nevertheless the romantic discourse was as much a part of workers' experience under communism as the coercive institutions they detested. Their general acquiescence in the contradiction between discourse and everyday perpetuation of the system was at the root of the occasional bouts of protest and the eventual rejection of the system as a whole. In the long term, against the background of stagnant or declining living standards, propaganda failed to enlighten most workers and coercion failed to produce disciplined and efficient ones. Workers may have been disempowered but they were not powerless to manipulate and resist the system.

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CHAPTER 28

COMMUNISM AND WOMEN

DONNA HARSCH

From the 1950s to the 1970s, many observers, and certainly communist leaders, believed that communism had successfully answered the 'woman question'. Every communist state, it was noted, guaranteed women equal rights under the law; opened public institutions to women and encouraged their participation as citizens, workers, and students; and implemented social policies that benefited women as mothers, whether married or single. In the 1980s, the critical balance tipped in the negative direction. Ever since, scholarship has emphasized communism's failure to realize gender equality. Many factors influenced this judgemental shift. Above all, rapid economic decline and political collapse in the 1980s coloured popular and scholarly opinion about every aspect of communism. Moreover, women in many Western countries had by then attained or even surpassed the advances of their sisters under communism, making its progress look less impressive.

New interpretive perspectives also downgraded communist accomplishments. Most important was the rise of second-wave feminism, a movement that not only contributed hugely to women's advancement in Western countries but also revised an older feminist understanding of women's oppression. The new feminism focused on gender relations in the private sphere, including sexuality, housework, and child-rearing. It decried cultural norms regarding the 'nature' and roles of both men and women. Radical feminists critiqued the assumption that women's liberation equalled entering public life as waged workers. The opening of archives in former communist states provided a different kind of new perspective: a wealth of untapped sources. Reams of documents from state and party archives exposed the often poor quality behind impressive-looking percentages, the popular complaints and actions that prodded state decisions, and the fraught social processes behind positive outcomes.

This chapter assesses continuity and change in communist gender relations, focusing on comparative trends. Despite major changes in their roles, it concludes, women did not attain equality with men. I attribute the persistence of gender inequalities, first, to the holding power of inherited gender relations and norms, especially in the domestic sphere. Communist ideology, second, underestimated the influence of unequal

domestic relations on women's public position and neglected to win men to 'women's work', especially in the home. Communist economic policy, third, instrumentalized women's paid and unpaid labour, treating it as a tool for attaining the primary goal of industrial development. Communist states, fourth, repressed civil society. In Western democracies, women could and, especially from the 1960s onwards, did organize to challenge cultural bias and public discrimination. Women resisted communist policies. Their protests were typically individualized and sporadic because they could not organize an autonomous movement.

The chapter notes cases of national divergence within comparable trends. In every realm of social life and state policy, communist countries adjusted the Soviet model of gender relations in response to custom, popular pressure, and specific economic and demographic developments. Even in areas of central concern to communism—ideology, politics, and socialized economies—differences existed. The Soviet Union went through a more profound revolution than any other country. Its early approach to women's liberation was uniquely radical. Social turmoil was so extraordinary in the USSR, in part, because the revolution unleashed upheaval in rural society. The Chinese revolution too swept through an overwhelmingly agrarian land. In the USSR and China, the patriarchal peasant family presented a stumbling block to overcoming even elemental forms of women's oppression. In politics, Poland stands out as the only society that engaged in repeated mass resistance against communism and remained loyal to a Catholic Church with considerable institutional autonomy. Catholic influence and popular protests together reinforced traditional gender norms among Poles.[1]

Theory, Ideology, and Cultural Discourse

Communist theory traced women's oppression to the patriarchal family. Communists understood that legal equality and individual rights would not end women's subordination in the family. Against feminism, however, they saw the patriarchal family as part and parcel of class society. Women's emancipation and familial change, they posited, depended fundamentally on the socialization of labour relations, including woman's participation in waged labour. Early Marxists recognized that woman could not realize her productive potential unless she was freed from domestic drudgery. Their solution to domestic exploitation, as to capitalist exploitation, was a socialized economy which would liberate women by transferring most consumption, childcare, and housework out of the home and into the public sector. Friedrich Engels went further. He envisioned socializing the family, not just displacing its work to socialized services.

Less revolutionary than communist theory was its gender ideology, defined here as ruling communist parties' dominant political discourse about women and sexual equality. This ideology focused heavily on women's legal and political equality, participation

in waged labour, and political engagement. Party publications often quoted Lenin: 'In order to emancipate women thoroughly and to realize real equality between women and men, it is necessary for women to participate in joint production and labour, and then women will stand in the same position as men.'[2]

Less progressive than its ideology of women's emancipation was, in turn, communism's cultural discourse, that is, its visual and rhetorical representations of women and men, on the one hand, and of the ideal communist, on the other. Iconography and language in the early Soviet Union construed the 'new socialist person' as male. Propaganda presented public life and activities, associated with men, as superior to domestic life and the home, associated with women. Ubiquitous poster-art placed the muscular male worker in the centre, with women in supporting roles. Only imagery directed at female audiences made women the main subject. The privileging of public engagement continued in post-war communist states. Members of Hungary's Politburo, for example, asserted that women's reproductive responsibilities held them back from the intense political activity expected of the ideal communist.[3]

Although the basic tenets of gender theory, ideology, and cultural discourse were never openly challenged or revised, they evolved over time—generally in a less radical direction. Only in the very early USSR did the revolutionary kernel of the Marxist critique of the family become a topic of political debate. Alexandra Kollontai, a leading Russian communist from the revolutionary era into the 1920s, argued passionately that the family would soon 'wither away'. Women party activists as well as jurists and social planners proposed that 'free union' replace legal marriage. Radicals called for 'communalization' of the household. By the mid-1920s, party authorities had come to distrust the feminist tendencies of the Women's Bureau (Zhenotdel) under Kollontai's leadership. They emphasized the ideology of women's emancipation through public engagement and discouraged free-spirited argument about private life. Women were urged to take part with men in communist activities for youth and workers. By the mid-1930s, official rhetoric had begun to emphasize women's domestic, especially reproductive, responsibilities in the nuclear family. However, Soviet discourse still challenged ingrained sexist beliefs such as the notion that women lacked technical and military abilities. Schools encouraged girls to study maths and engineering; after-school programmes trained them to shoot. During the Second World War, the Red Army deployed tens of thousands of female volunteers not only as radio operators and field medical personnel but as snipers and fighter pilots.[4]

After 1945, the semi-radical version of public gender ideology faded in the USSR. New communist states in Eastern Europe and China took up the 'woman question' at this stage. They controlled gender discourse from above and prevented it from veering off in radical directions. No communist party officially questioned the nuclear family as the form of domestic life under socialism. Western Cold Warriors, however, routinely accused communists of undermining the family because of their post-war emphasis on the right and ability of women, including wives and mothers, to work for wages in any type of industry. In the late 1950s, gender ideology shifted in a more traditional direction. Propaganda no longer insisted that women could work in 'male' occupations. It highlighted women's domestic roles and the significance of the family for raising (more)

children.[5] Gradually, gender discourse became less overtly political and came to combine traditional and modern features. It became more attentive to women's double burden and put some pressure on men to help their wives in the household. Cultural representations of both men and women became less idealized and more realistic. They portrayed each gender's array of everyday roles, yet emphasized women's maternal role much more than they did men's paternal responsibilities. Images of the 1970s and 1980s accurately depicted, without challenging, the feminization of occupations such as retail sales and the male composition of others such as construction.

Significant variations on this trajectory occurred in China and Poland. Chinese communism's gender ideology and cultural representations twisted and turned like a roller coaster in contrast to smoother transitions elsewhere. Ideology became suddenly more radical in the mid-1950s when Mao unleashed the disastrous Great Leap Forward. This sudden push to raise agricultural production included an abrupt socialization of household work, including mass dining halls. Although motivated by economic goals, the 'communal pot' was touted as advancing women's emancipation. The policy and its justification gave male family heads yet another reason to hate the Great Leap Forward. Party rhetoric soon switched course and, by 1960, merged with the more conservative trend in other communist lands. During the Cultural Revolution, cultural representation lurched towards public gender neutrality when Mao insisted on an egalitarian, androgynous sartorial style. In the 1970s, sexual differentiation again reasserted itself in discourse. Ever since, women are likelier to be celebrated as good wives and mothers than as stalwart workers or political activists.[6]

The conservative shift in representations of women's roles was especially pronounced in Poland. After the workers' rebellion of 1956, letters to the press from working-class men called for a return to a 'family wage' for men. Soon, official discourse began to discourage the employment of married mothers. The economic context was a decline in the need for female labour. Several scholars argue, however, that communist ideology adapted to a traditionalist counter-ideology rooted in popular culture. Supported by the Catholic Church, the oppositional forces that eventually cohered in the Solidarity movement defined national identity in gendered terms: women were strong mothers, men were strong workers. By the 1980s, a veritable cult of motherhood emerged as Solidarity and the communist state vied to represent mothers as fountains of Polish strength and objects of Polish protection.[7]

Politics

Neither individual women nor women as a group attained direct political power in any communist state. Initially, the number of women elected to national legislatures looked impressive, at least relative to women's low representation in the West. In most communist states, women's participation peaked in the 1960s between 20 and 30 per cent. In government administration, women did reasonably well at the lower rungs, especially

as their level of education rose, but were under-represented at the higher echelons. Very few women became a state minister and the ones who did served as minister of culture or education or consumer affairs, relatively marginal ministries. An exception was Hilde Benjamin, minister of justice in East Germany (GDR) from 1953 to 1967. Under her tenure, the administration of justice, including many judgeships, became notably feminized.[8]

Women's participation in the communist party, the real centre of power, was relatively low at the bottom and almost non-existent at the regional or national level. Even in the 1980s, Polish men comprised 75 per cent and East German men 65 per cent of their respective communist parties. Women were much less likely than men to hold paid posts and highly unlikely to occupy a position of power such as party secretary, especially above the local level. Party central committees were extremely lopsidedly male. The percentage of women members, including candidates and voting members, ranged from a low of 7 per cent in Czechoslovakia (ČSSR) (1980s) to a high of 17 per cent in Cuba (1991). The politburo was everywhere an utterly male preserve. Only one woman ever was a voting member of the Soviet Politburo. No woman attained voting status in the GDR Politburo.[9]

Overlapping types of discriminations determined women's political under-representation. Given their second shift of domestic labour, employed women had many fewer hours than employed men did to engage in political activities, much less to groom a political career. Politics required connections which women rarely possessed. With stunning lack of irony, communist men often criticized women as overly invested in private, familial matters and, thus, apolitical. After attaining power, the party functioned like an old boys' network that dispensed patronage and recommended promotions and awards. It took courageous, tenacious women to challenge the biases of male communists. Such women sometimes had the support of higher-up men who were eager to bring in women as party members or even functionaries but only below their own level of power.

Every communist state had a mass organization of and for women. The blueprint was the Soviet Zhenotdel, although it was abolished in 1930 and later replaced with a docile successor. In China and Eastern Europe after 1945 and later in Cuba, communist women's leagues were initially quite autonomous and eager to represent women's interests and, especially, women workers. Party leaders soon brought them into line. Relegated to cheerleading for the party line, the woman's organization took up the task of convincing housewives to join the workforce. Today, the Federation for Cuban Women enjoys little input into policy-making and depends on Raul Castro for support. The Chinese federation's most important assignment is to investigate discrimination against daughters in rural families and, in particular, female infanticide.[10]

Employment and Education

Communism achieved its goal of bringing women of every social status—married and single, mothers and not, rural and urban, unskilled and skilled—into waged labour.

By 1970, women comprised a substantial portion or, indeed, a majority of the labour force throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Women's labour contributed centrally to the industrialization of every communist economy. The mobilization of women's labour and the modernization of the economy constituted huge social transformations which generated backlash and, in the case of women's employment, backsliding. Nowhere was gender equality achieved in occupational distribution, skills, promotion, or compensation. A combination of popular resistance, inconsistent official commitment, women's lack of skills at the start point, path dependency, and the growth of the service sector slowed and distorted the goal of de-gendering the workforce and contributed to gender segmentation. Women's wages lagged behind men's for all the reasons they do in capitalist economies: the kind of occupations they filled; lower skill levels; biased job assignments; the drag of domestic duties on time and energy.

In every country, the early phase of industrialization saw some progress towards breaking barriers to women's employment in 'male' industries. The First Five-Year Plan in the USSR, in particular, introduced women workers into every branch of industry, including metallurgy and mining. Simultaneously, cultural norms and economic anxiety fuelled resistance to women's employment, especially of wives and in 'male' occupations. In Poland, women who took jobs as miners in the 1950s faced hostility from both male miners and their wives. In Cuba, the campaign to draw wives into employment provoked working-class men to flee the country.[11] Over time, men felt less threatened by women co-workers and husbands came to appreciate a wife's income. Women were integrated into industry, although mainly 'light industry'. The majority held unskilled or semi-skilled jobs—and, especially in the USSR, did so through the end of communism. (For more on women in industry, see Chapter 29 by Donald Filzer.)

Not surprisingly, young women were eager to leave industry for service occupations. In the 1960s, as communist economies expanded their service sector, women entered those positions in droves. In Eastern Europe, the USSR, and Cuba, women were over-represented in public health and social welfare, education, government administration, credit and insurance, retail trade and sales, restaurants and catering. They found it easier to move up the promotional scale in these branches, although men dominated top management.

By the 1970s, the profile of women's employment looked similar across most communist states. Minor differences existed such as the higher percentage of Soviet women who worked in classically male industries. This distinction was presumably a legacy of Soviet labour policy of the 1930s. A major difference was between countries where a high percentage of women worked in agriculture and those where they did not. This distinction applied to the USSR and, above all, China. After collectivization, peasant labourers earned a wage—which theoretically increased women's independence within the household. In practice, the effects of wages were minimal, at least for the first decade or so. Male family heads dominated the collective, especially in China, and maintained a gendered division of labour which disadvantaged women. Men pushed the plough and steered the tractor, while women weeded, transplanted, and harvested, tasks that were paid much less. In both societies, peasant women tended the allotted private plot and

marketed its produce, and engaged in handicraft production. This work provided the household with considerable food and/or cash and gradually brought women higher standing in the family and respect in the village. Yet peasant women remained at the bottom of rural society which, in turn, was at the bottom of society as a whole. As millions of men fled the countryside for work in the burgeoning cities, women came to comprise the majority of labourers on Soviet collective farms. The feminization of collective farms occurred in China more gradually, only really taking off when industrialization siphoned off huge numbers of men in the 1980s.[12]

Because of China's later industrialization and large number of tiny workshops, urban women's work developed differently there than elsewhere. In the wake of the radical Great Leap Forward, women were pushed out of the workforce and did not re-enter in large numbers before the mid-1970s. Even then, women workers were concentrated in shops with very low wages and under-represented in the socialized sector with its good benefits and lifetime employment. Women have moved heavily into industrial employment since the market reforms of the 1980s but mainly into light industry.[13]

Education constituted a success story for women under communism in Europe and Cuba. The expansion of elementary schooling for rural and poor girls and boys opened up many teaching positions for women. The prospect of teaching encouraged girls to enter secondary school and teacher training colleges. Initially, some working-class parents took daughters out of school but that prejudice dissipated. By the late 1950s, urban Soviet girls had higher rates of secondary education than boys. Girls surpassed boys in secondary education in the GDR and Czechoslovakia in the 1960s and elsewhere in Eastern Europe in the 1970s. Communist states expanded universities, opening up spaces which young women flooded into. Everywhere, women became the majority of students by the early 1980s, and in the USSR, GDR, and ČSSR did so considerably earlier than that. Skill levels also improved for working-class women, due to programmes that allowed them to train on the job or study at home, rather than have to attend a traditional apprenticeship programme.

Educational trends reflected and contributed to the feminization of certain economic branches. Female students clustered in the humanities, arts, education, and health sciences. Socialized medicine was friendly to them—and the physician's profession became heavily feminized. In Cuba, women's predominance in medicine has won them huge respect, given the successes and popularity of its health-care system. Neither in academia nor the professions, however, did women reach the top tier. They were under-represented in the physical sciences and technical fields. The record of the USSR was somewhat better, suggesting that encouragement of girls to study maths, science, and engineering remained stronger there.[14]

Peasant girls and women did not fit the urban educational pattern, especially in poorer countries with large rural populations. In the USSR, more than 50 per cent of rural women had only a primary education in 1970; 20 per cent did not have even that. Rural women's attendance at secondary schools did improve by 1980. The situation in China was much worse—and not only in the countryside. In 1995, 25 per cent of Chinese women were illiterate or semi-literate compared to 10 per cent of men. Girls comprised

48.7 per cent of pupils between 5 and 14 years of age, and 36.4 per cent of post-secondary students.[15]

Family, Reproduction, and Sexuality

Every communist state introduced a family law that eliminated the privileges of husbands in the division of property and family decision-making, and also legalized divorce. Depending on preexisting law and customs, family reform brought major change in one or more areas of law. Especially striking was the introduction of an equal right to financial support and inheritance for children born out of wedlock. Family reform elicited immense public interest everywhere, as demonstrated by crowded meetings and mountains of letters to the press and state officials. Opposition to reform was passionate; it emanated disproportionately from rural areas, husbands and fathers, older (especially non-employed) wives, and religious people. Support for reform was stronger in cities, among young people, and among employed women. Some legal provisions were initially controversial everywhere, including joint spousal decision-making about children; the right of a wife to take a job against her husband's wishes; and easier divorce. Also common was the complaint that communists did not value the family as a societal institution.[16]

Many communist states delayed the introduction of reform (GDR, Cuba) or eventually revised their own earlier law (USSR, ČSSR, China). Later laws did not alter the principle of equality, change equalizing provisions, or abolish divorce. Rather, they emphasized the central, indeed, the foundational, importance of marriage and the family to socialist society and, specifically, to raising children. This discourse, enshrined in law, heralded the era of the family under communism. In the USSR, arguably, it dawned twice—in the late 1930s and again in the 1960s. By the 1970s, every communist state had modified not only family law but also social policy in a family-friendly direction.

The main reason for reaffirmation of the family was the desire to overcome unwanted social trends such as a declining overall birth rate, rise in births to unwed women, increasing divorce rate, and rising rate of juvenile crime or, at least, unruliness. Although officials assumed the trends were related to the rise in women's employment, communists in most countries could not afford and did not intend to reduce the rate of women's waged labour. Just the opposite: they wanted more wives and young mothers to join the workforce and to train for skilled work. Before summarizing social developments and official responses to them, I will briefly discuss Soviet family policy before 1945 and the special case of the peasant family in the USSR and China.

The USSR's family code of 1918 was revolutionary. It instituted civil marriage, allowed for no community of property or claims of one spouse on the other's property, and made divorce extremely easy to obtain. In 1920 the Soviet state legalized abortion and developed schemes for the communal upbringing of tens of thousands of children orphaned by revolutionary upheaval and civil war. Lack of money, inadequate orphanages,

and fear of kids running wild in the streets undermined its transformative impulses. Communist lawmakers decided that, after all, the family was the best place for children. The code of 1926 was more pro-family but recognized cohabitation as equal to registered marriage. Divorce shot up in the cities, fathers did not pay child support, and mothers were abandoned without resources. Ordinary women and many women activists, Wendy Goldman suggests, supported parts of Joseph Stalin's code of 1936, specifically, its insistence on registered marriage, tighter divorce regulations, and severe penalties for men who reneged on child support. Its 'strengthening of the family', which included the recriminalization of abortion, aimed to redress a decline in the birth rate.[17]

Family reform played out differently in the Soviet countryside where its effects looked similar to those in China a quarter-century later. Communists intended land reform and family reform to improve the peasant woman's place in the family. Unfortunately, the land code worked at cross-purposes to the family code. In both countries, the peasant family was patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal, and multi-generational. It functioned as a household economy. Land reform distributed landlords' land to peasant families, thus creating many new patriarchal households and strengthening the family as a production unit. The land code gave women a rightful claim to family land but land was held in common by the household and could not be parcelled out. Meanwhile, family reform divided property individually and gave wives the right to sue for divorce. Thousands of peasant wives seized the opportunity to file for divorce and/or claim their right to land. Faced with incompatible codes, Soviet jurists had to adjudicate between women and the peasant household. In China, family reform unleashed even worse social conflict. When women filed for divorce or made a claim on land, according to Judith Stacey, they 'often faced fierce, even lethal resistance' from husbands, in-laws, and some local communists. In both countries, patrilocality and patrilineal inheritance persevered. In China, prospective daughters-in-law were vetted for potential value added to the household. Yet over time the classic arranged marriage evolved into a system of 'arranged courtship' that allowed children, including daughters, to veto a prospective spouse. Urban mores spread to the countryside as educational levels rose, the media propagated romantic love, and, after collectivization, women's position in the household became more like that of an employed wife in an urban family.[18]

In cities, the trend towards love-marriage, companionate spousal relations, and less authoritarian parent–child relations began earlier and was much stronger. In the wake of the Second World War, and perhaps related to the horrible loss of life in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China, marriage regained its appeal after a brief spike in divorce. Rates of marriage were high, although housing shortages forced a partial return to the extended family even in cities. As communist industrialization took off, some apartments (but far from enough) were built—and married couples, especially with a child, were given priority, a policy that encouraged early marriage and early conception of the first child.

The urban socialist family achieved a transitional stage between the patriarchal and the egalitarian family—and did not move beyond that phase. Anecdotal evidence suggests that spouses jointly decided important family matters. Yet the division of domestic

labour barely budged. No communist state seriously challenged the gendered culture of the home, although publicists did encourage fathers to develop closer relations with their children. In the 1960s, advice books, women's magazines, and the general press began to pressure men to help in the home. The propaganda was too little, too late and still tended to trivialize housework. According to Eastern European and Soviet surveys of the 1970s (when almost half the workforce was female), women performed 80 to 90 per cent of household work. They shouldered almost all child-rearing tasks, from feeding and nappy-changing to comforting and homework-help. Their share of housework (shopping, cooking, cleaning, laundry, repair of clothing and the home, etc.) was somewhat lower, for both husbands and children offered them some relief from these tasks.[19]

The divorce rate increased in every communist country. Initially, urban husbands filed the majority of cases. Women activists joined older wives in complaining that divorce reform harmed women, especially since the courts reduced or eliminated alimony. As masses of women entered the workforce in the 1960s, wives emerged as the majority of complainants—and the number of divorces shot up. Divorce rates in the USSR and GDR were among the top five in the world. An outlier was Poland which had a lower rate of divorce than elsewhere in Eastern Europe and one still driven by husbands. Wife-complainants were typically young and employed. Virtually all had children school-aged or younger. Topping the lists of grounds for divorce were 'incompatibility' about how to run a home and raise children, infidelity (especially by the husband but on the rise among wives), and husbands' alcohol abuse.[20]

Communist officials were not pleased. As they knew, married women bore more children than did single women. Right after the Second World War, communist lands had experienced a 'baby boom'. Moreover, most of them were then predominantly agrarian—and peasant women had a higher birth rate than urban dwellers. The birth rate began to fall throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union around 1960 (and a decade later in Cuba). Four factors combined to reduce birth rates: urbanization; rising levels of female education; availability of birth control; and women's workforce participation. Early on, communist states relied heavily on the waged labour of single women and women whose children were older. As these reserves dried up, they had to mobilize the labour of young mothers—and the birth rate declined even more.[21] Communist states were pro-natalist even before their birth rates fell. They encouraged reproduction with social policies such as child allowances and maternity leaves. Now, they expanded these natalist measures.

In response to declining birth rates, states began to expand institutionalized childcare. Despite fanfare surrounding the creation of crèches in the 1950s, the actual record was spotty. Everywhere, employed women cobbled together childcare, often depending on their own mothers as caretakers, and complained continually to officials about the lack of day-care 'slots' for their children. Most surprising is the late date of expansion in the Soviet Union. In 1960, only 13 per cent of children under 7 years old spent the day in a nursery or kindergarten. By 1975, the percentage had increased to 37 per cent, but remained much lower in the countryside.[22] A counter-current against institutionalized care began to pulse through public culture at the same moment as day care was

expanded. Worker-mothers grumbled not only about the low quantity but also the poor quality of institutionalized care. Their complaints motivated psychologists to study the question. Their findings set off a debate throughout Eastern Europe and the USSR about the psychological and cognitive development of infants and toddlers in institutional versus maternal care. Ordinary women, psychologists, and physicians weighed in. This debate aired publicly only because communist authorities themselves were alarmed by expert warnings about the negative impact of day care on children's development, on the one hand, and of divorce, single motherhood, and even maternal employment on the academic achievement of adolescents, on the other.[23]

The contradiction between expanding day care while touting the advantages of family care encapsulated the quandary facing communists in Eastern Europe and the USSR around 1960. They needed women to work for wages and they needed more children; they needed women to gain skills and they needed children to be well prepared for school and employment. Communist states addressed the dilemma with what the Sovietologist Gail Lapidus calls a 'straddle strategy' which aimed to make it easier for women to combine reproduction and production by easing the double burden. They also tried to enhance quality of life in ways that would allow women to become more productive workers, while simultaneously meeting a higher standard of child-rearing.

Social reforms such as longer maternity leaves were everywhere similar but were weighted differently, especially in the case of institutionalized childcare. In most countries, psychologists and popular opinion convinced policy makers that maternal care was better for young children. In the USSR, not ideology but lack of funding prevented a dramatic expansion of day care. Only in the GDR was massive provision of kindergartens a major part of the 'straddle strategy'. By 1989, spots were available for 80 per cent of East German toddlers in contrast to 16 per cent in Czechoslovakia and single-digit coverage in Hungary, Poland, and Romania. After 1977, East German women also enjoyed the most generous maternity leave and had more opportunities for part-time work than elsewhere. The GDR was particularly desperate for skilled labour. To pay for social programmes it borrowed massively from West Germany from the 1970s on. It thus wanted and was able to implement all the reforms just mentioned. Yet the GDR was not alone: by the 1980s, every Eastern European state (but not the USSR) spent more than 20 per cent of GDP on social programmes and subsidies.[24]

Despite the interest in a higher birth rate, only one communist state (re)criminalized abortion—Romania in 1966. The history of the regulation of abortion under communism is complicated. In 1945, the USSR's anti-abortion law of 1936 was still in place. Determined to replace wartime population losses, Eastern European states criminalized most abortions. The high birth rate of the early 1950s convinced all of them, except the GDR, to legalize abortion soon after the USSR's (re)legalization of 1955. The GDR party leadership came round to legalization only in 1971 under internal pressure from gynaecologists, women activists, and pregnant women, and eager to prove it was a better friend of women than was West Germany. Cuba legalized abortion in 1979. In every state, a major reason for legalization was the high number of illegal abortions. No state

wanted to return to that practice. Nor did any other state want to implement Romania's invasive surveillance of women's reproductive lives.[25]

With the exception of Romania, communist states did not legally restrict contraception. They had, however, a mixed record of making contraception available. In the 1950s, spermicides and cervical caps were very hard to come by. Condoms were more accessible but neither abundant nor of good quality. The GDR was one of the first countries in the world to produce the 'anti-baby pill'. After 1971, its health system provided the pill for free. In contrast, it was unavailable in the USSR as late as 1978. There, many couples reported using a contraceptive (probably condoms) but women depended on abortion as a major method of birth control. The situation in Eastern European countries stood in between the GDR and USSR. China stands out as a non-natalist communist state that promoted 'family planning' from the 1970s on. Urban couples complied with its two-child, then one-child, policy. Rural couples often did not. Selective abortion became widespread and families under-reported female births. By the 1990s, 83 per cent of couples used contraception (mainly the intrauterine device and female sterilization).[26]

Communists rarely adopted a moralistic antisexual language. In the 1950s, official rhetoric about sex was infrequent, except when condemning youth's attraction to 'degenerate' music and dancing associated with American pop culture. Sex education in schools was minimal to non-existent before coming institutionalized in the 1960s, at least in Czechoslovakia, GDR, and Cuba. Anti-sodomy laws were not repealed anywhere before the 1960s and considerably later in several countries. Attitudes towards adult heterosexuality were, however, pragmatic. Premarital sex was widespread in East Germany, for example. Single mothers were not shamed (at least officially). In the 1970s, sexual mores relaxed considerably and sexual enlightenment, especially about female sexuality and clitoral stimulation, came into vogue in a number of communist countries. Influenced by German cultural traditions, West German TV (watched surreptitiously), and the party's blessing, an emancipated heterosexuality blossomed in East Germany: women's sexual fulfilment was celebrated, and 'free body culture' (nudism) entered the mainstream of leisure pastimes.[27]

Consumption

The Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulić places everyday scarcity at the centre of her memoir *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*. She recounts encounters with women of various social backgrounds in every Eastern European country. Nearly every story revolves around struggles to deal with shortages of items such as toilet paper, sanitary pads, shampoo, and coffee. She creates, in effect, a communist Everywoman whose life was defined by scarcity and poor quality of basic consumer goods. Men too cared about scarcity: social protest and strikes by both men and women targeted shortages, queues, and prices. Yet Drakulić's focus on women makes sense, for women and the communist state saw consumption as a woman's issue. Official understanding

of the political nexus between women and consumption was articulated by a member of Hungary's Politburo in the 1960s: 'Women do not judge the technological development of the Soviet Union through rockets, but through the availability of labour-saving devices. If they find a fault, they blame the whole system immediately, not just the concrete problem.'[28]

As the quote suggests, party leaders took a dim view of private consumption relative to technological development. In the future, people would eat in cafeterias, drop their dirty clothes at a laundry, attend cultural events and political rallies, visit the library, and romp with their children at playgrounds. Looking ahead, it seemed unnecessary to modernize, much less to redistribute, domestic labour today. In real life, the private home required intensive, time-consuming labour. Every communist party came to power after a devastating war. Poor countries had become poorer. Most people lived in cramped cold-water flats without central heating. Washing the laundry was a particularly backbreaking job. As communist regimes squeezed consumption for capital investment in order to get economies going again, they relied heavily on women to do the unpaid work of social reproduction. Not surprisingly, rather than look to the socialized future, women yearned to mechanize the home now. States did make some effort to socialize domestic labour, above all, by encouraging every member of the family to eat their midday meal in a factory or school canteen. Laundries, shoe repair kiosks, sewing centres, and food shops were opened in some factories to save workers time. These ventures were underfunded and the appalling meals, long queues, and lengthy wait-times for clean laundry infuriated customers. Ironically, capitalist commercialization of services ended up displacing work out of the home more effectively than did socialization. By the 1960s, people in Western countries were likelier to eat out, use a commercial laundry, or buy ready-made clothes than were citizens of communist states.[29]

Communist discourse about consumption was inconsistent. The press ridiculed the Western obsession with fashion as trivial and demeaning to women. Yet every communist woman's organization published a magazine which featured pictures of models in work and leisure clothes, beauty tips, decorating ideas, and housekeeping advice. Factories with large female workforces hosted fashion shows. These tantalizing glimpses of a modest but comfortable and pretty private life were intended to entice women into waged work or to train for skilled work to earn more money. They reinforced women's desire for the very kinds of consumption that communist economies slighted. Such images thus, heightened consumer dissatisfaction.[30] The 1960s ushered in communism's version of a consumer revolution. Not only did communist economies have more resources to devote to consumer production, but officials recognized that on this front too women's double burden must be reduced. In Eastern Europe, every economy increased production of consumer durables, including refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and televisions. The USSR and Cuba followed suit in the 1970s. Gaps between the East and Western Europe, not to speak of the United States, remained wide. Gaps between communist states were also substantial, with the GDR again in the lead. Most states began residential construction programmes, after having neglected housing

since the war. The service economy also improved, especially in Czechoslovakia and Hungary where many more retail and service outlets dotted city streets than earlier.[31]

These developments helped women combine employment, child-rearing, and household labour. Yet they were a poor imitation of a Western blueprint that also has not solved the problem of women's double burden. Consumer production was, moreover, plagued by shortages and bottlenecks. In the early 1980s, economic difficulties hit every communist economy and shortages of even basic goods reappeared. Mounting consumer dissatisfaction played a major role in the increasingly vocal popular protest that led to the fall of communism in 1989–90.

Conclusion

Under communism, women did not achieve equality with men. They did not attain self-determination or social autonomy. Still, communism dramatically changed women's social position. In return, women indirectly shaped communism's trajectory. Their decisions about education, employment, marriage, and reproduction forced communist parties to revise social programmes and consumption policies. Along the way, women's sense of self and their attitude towards communism evolved. At the advent of the communist era in every country, ordinary women were generally suspicious of communism *as women*. By the 1980s, women were as disillusioned as men and basically for the same reasons. In between women divided in their opinion of communist policies along lines of age, marital status, maternal status, employment status, educational level, and urban/rural residency. Yet in many countries very many women came round, above all, to communism's ideology about gender relations: the importance of waged work to woman's independence. Surveys from the 1970s and 1980s showed that a majority of women in the USSR, GDR, and ČSSR felt committed to employment. The percentage was just under half in Poland. Educated women reported that their work fulfilled them personally and seemed socially important to them.[32] If these results do not sound revolutionary, that is because attitudes towards women's education and employment have been transformed since the days of the early Cold War era. Communism contributed significantly to that transformation.

Notes

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28. Fodor, 'Smiling Women and Fighting Men', 256.
29. Heitlinger, *Women and State Socialism*, 86–7.
30. Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*, 125, 179.
31. Heitlinger, *Women and State Socialism*, 87; Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 136–7; Boutenko and Razlogov, *Social trends in Russia*, 257–8.
32. Bystydzienski, 'Women and Socialism,' 669–72; Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*, 314–15.

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CHAPTER 29

PRIVILEGE AND INEQUALITY IN COMMUNIST SOCIETY

DONALD FILTZER

> While I was in Moscow, his [Brezhnev's] mother was still living, and, according to the anecdote, Brezhnev wanted to impress her with how well he had done. He decided to invite her up from their home in Dneprodzerzhinsk, in the Ukraine and showed her through his ample in-town apartment but she was nonplussed, even a little ill-at-ease. So he called the Kremlin, ordered his Zil [a Soviet limousine used by high officials—*D.F.*], and they sped out to his dacha near Usovo, one used previously by Stalin and Khrushchev. He took her all around, showed her each room, showed her the handsome grounds, but still she said nothing. So he called for his personal helicopter and flew her straight to his hunting lodge at Zavidovo. There, he escorted her to the banquet room, grandly displaying the big fireplace, his guns, the whole bit and, unable to restrain himself any longer, asked her pleadingly, 'Tell me, Mama, what do you think?' 'Well', she hesitated, 'it's good, Leonid. But what if the Reds come back?'[1]

One feature that the Soviet Union and the Soviet-type societies of post-war Eastern Europe shared with capitalist societies was their hierarchical social structure, where a privileged elite enjoyed material privileges and lifestyles far superior to those experienced by the ordinary population. Essentially, workers and peasants toiled in factories and fields to produce the physical wealth which the elite appropriated and redistributed between investments in industry and agriculture, public welfare, and the consumption allocated to different social groups, with itself receiving a privileged share. Compared to capitalist societies, however, analysis of this process is complicated by a number of factors.

Perhaps the most important is that large parts of consumption were demonetized. These societies showed substantial inequalities in income but, because food, housing, and basic consumer goods were in such short supply, money alone did not determine

a family's standard of living. The latter depended on a range of non-monetary factors, such as where one stood in the political hierarchy, the strategic importance of the enterprise or institution for which one worked, and the ability to exchange favours with those well placed to provide one with access to scarce goods, whether it be a salami for entertaining family on a birthday or public holiday, pushing oneself up the multi-year waiting list to buy a car, moving into a self-contained flat, laying one's hands on the bricks or cement needed to build a small suburban cottage (*dacha*), or penicillin to treat one's sick child. As we shall see, the differential in monetary incomes between even the upper echelons of the intelligentsia and ordinary workers was in general quite modest by Western standards, and for the middle-ranking intelligentsia almost non-existent, but the intelligentsia nonetheless enjoyed much better housing, owned more consumer goods, and found it easier to bequeath to their children a superior education and eventual entry into an intelligentsia profession.

The second great difficulty is the limited nature of the data. By this I do not mean economic data on wages and incomes, which were indeed incomplete and of questionable accuracy, but something both more basic and more complex: the social groups about which we have only imperfect information. Beginning in the mid-1960s sociologists in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe began to undertake serious studies of inequality. These may have been methodologically flawed and the authors constrained by rigid censorship in the way they reported and analysed their results, but, when examined as a whole, they showed unmistakably that these societies were highly stratified and displayed the features of an inherited class structure. The great limitation of these research efforts was the social groups they were allowed to analyse: the peasantry; unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled workers; low-level specialists; and the technical intelligentsia (those with a tertiary education). These indeed accounted for the overwhelming proportion of the Soviet and East European populations, but they excluded the most privileged group of all: the political elite of higher Communist Party officials, directors of the largest industrial enterprises, the heads of the large research institutes, and favoured artists, writers, and scientists. Therefore, while we can roughly approximate the gap in consumption between the technical intelligentsia and skilled or semi-skilled manual workers, it is nearly impossible to quantify the gulf that separated these workers from a member of the Politburo, the head of a large ministry, the chairperson of the Soviet Writers' Union, or a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

Yet we know this gap was large. Members of the elite had sumptuous flats, large country cottages, chauffeur-driven cars to ferry them about, access to Western clothes, furniture, and foods, and the right to read Western newspapers and watch Western films. If they or their families fell ill, they would be treated in special hospitals with the best (often Western) medical equipment and well-trained doctors and surgeons. The families of workers, clerical employees, and low-level professionals such as schoolteachers, either occupied a single room in a shared (communal) flat or, if they were lucky, had a small, one-room flat of their own. They spent many hours each day queuing for a very limited array of foodstuffs. They travelled everywhere by public transport. Saving the money—and getting off the waiting list—for a suit of clothes or a pair of shoes could

take many months or even years, and then the quality was so bad that the clothes or shoes might fall apart not long after purchase. If they took sick they would have access to medical care, but care administered by poorly trained, indifferent doctors in rundown, badly equipped clinics and hospitals, where even the most conscientious physicians and surgeons had to make do with outdated equipment and a chronic shortage of all but the most basic drugs (even in the late Soviet period, it was routine to perform appendectomies without anaesthesia).

These glaring class inequalities defined the basic contours of Soviet social structure, but they were not the only lines along which the society was stratified. Within this larger tale there were many, often complex, subplots: rural–urban inequalities; the segmentation of the industrial workforce; gender inequalities; inequalities between Slavs and non-Slavs. Some of these are dealt with in other chapters of the *Handbook*, and so do not feature here. Gender and rural–urban inequalities we deal with partially, insofar as they are key to understanding divisions and hierarchies within the workforce.

The discussion in this chapter focuses primarily on the Soviet Union. Social inequalities in the various East European countries showed some significant differences with the USSR, most notably in the existence, at least from the mid-1950s onwards, of a large sector of private peasants and farmers, and the more prominent position of the intelligentsia within the ruling elite. These differences, as important as they were, do not alter the fact that the social structures of the countries of Eastern Europe, the nature of privilege, and the ways in which these privileges were allocated, all derived from their existence as Soviet-type regimes. Where we do draw comparisons and contrasts, these will be with China, which, although also fundamentally a Soviet-type society (at least up until the late 1980s), diverged from the Soviet 'model' of inequality in some quite important ways.

Social Structure and Social Mobility

The 1920s saw acrimonious debates within the Bolshevik Party over the ease with which even minor Party officials were becoming used to privileges that the small Soviet working class did not enjoy. In most cases these privileges were only relative, but in a poor country marked by scarcity, bad housing, and in the immediate post-civil war years uncertain food supplies, even relative advantages could seem large and worth defending.[2]

It was under Stalin, however, during the launch of the early Five-Year Plans, that the overt encouragement of inequality became official policy. At a time of almost unimaginable hardship—mass famine in the countryside and near-famine levels of hunger in the towns—Stalin encouraged the formation of a privileged caste of managers and top officials whose standard of living set them sharply apart from those whom they managed and directed. Victor Kravchenko, an engineer and committed socialist whose experiences working in Soviet industry during the 1930s turned him into an equally committed anti-Stalinist, received his first major posting as an industrial manager in

early 1935, being assigned to the Nikopol' iron and steel combine in the Dnepropetrovsk region of Ukraine. Arriving in the town he was struck by the grim contrast between the living conditions of the factory's workers and his own luxurious situation as manager.

> Unhappily, the plant itself was far from town, in a dismal emptiness. Its five thousand workers were still for the most part packed into crude barracks, better than those that had shocked me during my first visit, but still more fit for animals than for human beings. The ordinary workers ate in a huge, unsanitary, evil-smelling cafeteria; a cleaner and better supplied restaurant served the top foremen and engineers; a third and quite modern restaurant was at the disposal of a handful of the most important officials who, in addition, were supplied with ample food in their homes from produce raised on the factory grounds. These steep class distinctions were so traditional in Russia that only foreigners thought them paradoxical in a 'proletarian' country.
>
> Personally, I was installed in a commodious five-room house about a mile from the factory. It was one of eight such houses for the use of the upper-most officials. Mine was set among tall trees and had a pleasant, well-tended flower garden as well as a small orchard in the back. It was equipped with a bathtub, radio, and even a substantial icebox. There was a car in the garage and a couple of fine horses were at my disposal—factory property, of course, but as exclusively mine while I held the job as if I had owned them. A chauffeur and stableman, as well as a husky peasant woman who did the housework and cooking, came with the house; I paid the woman, the others were on the factory payroll.[3]

Kravchenko's experience was typical of that of hundreds of thousands of young people from the working class or peasant backgrounds, who used the opportunities opened up by industrialization to enter what in effect became a new social group or layer under Stalin, the technical intelligentsia. In fact, the process of industrialization witnessed two social transformations that on the surface might seem to be contradictory. First, it saw the crystallization and consolidation of a pyramidal social structure, with a small, highly privileged elite at the top and a mass of super-exploited workers and peasants—the creators of the society's surplus product—at the bottom, with a small but rapidly growing new stratum of technical specialists (engineers, scientists, lower-level managers, economists, accountants) in between. Secondly, the elite—the 'ruling class' within this hierarchical structure—was becoming increasingly proletarian in its social origins.

Looking first at the social structure, we can portray it as a pyramid, similar to how we might diagram a capitalist society (see Figure 29.1).

Key here is the stratum of specialists and the intelligentsia and the way in which this stratum formed. Between 1926 and 1939 the number of Party and state officials, including upper-level managers of industrial enterprises, construction organizations, and collective and state farms, increased from 266,000 to 1,416,000, a rise of 430 per cent. The number of engineers and agronomists went from 249,000 to 1,915,000, an increase of 670 per cent. This is not to mention an equally swift expansion in the ranks of the very lowest rungs of the intelligentsia: schoolteachers, heads of children's homes, propagandists, and artists, whose combined ranks increased by nearly 350 per cent, from 463,000

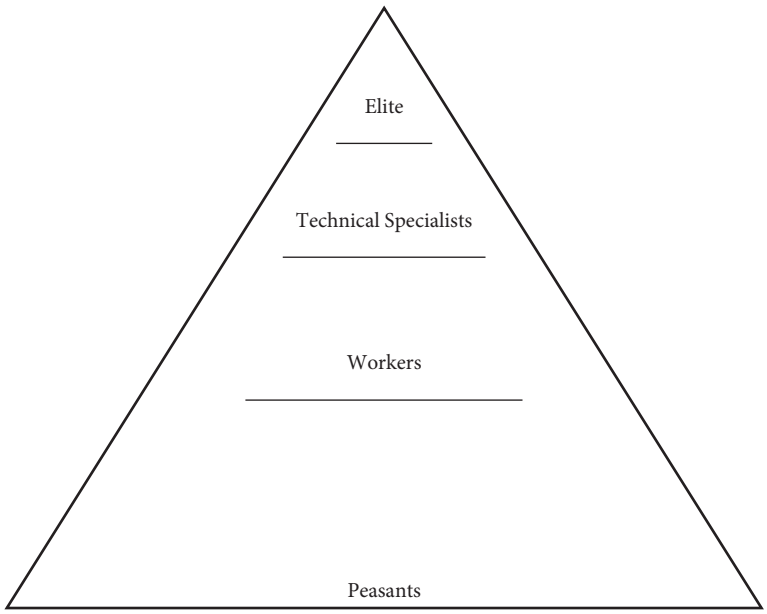


FIGURE 29.1 The social pyramid

in 1926 to 2,076,000 in 1939.[4] These various groupings together made up the Party elite and the intelligentsia. These were far from monolithic strata, but contained within them their own sharp social differentiations of privilege and access to power. There was a world difference between a high official in the Soviet Writers' Union or Academy of Sciences, and a mid-ranking engineer designing parts in a factory. There were even greater differentiations between a regional Communist Party boss and the head of a factory Party cell. Yet however sharp these gradations, these groups formed a stratum which lived a life essentially different from that lived by ordinary workers and peasants.

What drove this huge growth? Every new factory that the Soviet leadership built during the Five-Year Plans of the 1930s required an entirely new complement of managers, engineers, chemists, designers, draftsmen, economists, and accountants—professions that for the most part either barely existed in the USSR or whose members were too few in number to meet the sudden demand for these skills. The leadership in part solved this problem through the rapid promotion of shopfloor workers to low-level managerial posts—positions from which many advanced even further to head up major factory departments or indeed whole factories. The major source, however, was the rapid training and matriculation of a new generation of engineers and specialists turned out by newly created technical schools and institutes. The students at these institutes came from the working class and the peasantry, but upon graduation they took up non-proletarian jobs as specialists and managers, jobs from which many went on to become leading Party officials. In this way Stalinism during the 1930s created for itself a new social base, made up of people promoted out of the peasantry and industrial workforce into the

ranks of managers, engineers, and other intelligentsia professions. As we saw in the quotation from Victor Kravchenko (himself a proletarian product of one of these institutes), these people enjoyed considerable and highly visible privileges, with a lifestyle and status markedly superior to those of ordinary workers, not to mention peasants. For these people Stalinism as a system 'worked', and they well understood that they owed their new-found good fortune to Stalinist industrialization. Yet Stalin did not fully trust this new stratum, and many of its members died or went to labour camps during the Terror of 1936–8. However, the positions these people had held did not disappear. The individuals may have perished, but a new wave of 'promotees' arose to take their place, a group even more keenly aware of the source of its privileges (the physical destruction of their predecessors) and thus more closely bound to the Stalinist system.

This process created what at first might look like a paradox. You had a regime that was increasingly hierarchical, with very sharp vertical stratification, that was at the same time in terms of its social origins increasingly proletarian. The important point here is that the proletarian and peasant backgrounds of the leadership and middle strata did not alter the fact that the overwhelming mass of the population did not change their social class, but remained at the bottom of the social pyramid. They continued to expend their labour power producing the surplus product from which this new elite and its supporting stratum of intelligentsia drew their privileges.

This rapid social mobility did, however, act to obscure the longer-term tendency of the Stalinist system to develop a reproducible, inherited class structure. Yet already by the 1960s—a period when social mobility, although slower than before, was still a prominent feature of Soviet society—Soviet sociologists found that the occupation, or class position, of a person's father was the single greatest determinant of that person's own occupation. In 1960 specialists made up just under 10 per cent of the total Soviet workforce. By 1970 this percentage had risen to just over 14 per cent. During this same period, however, the children of specialists made up around 60 per cent of medical and pharmacy students in the Russian republic (RSFSR), and over three-quarters of science postgraduate students at the Leningrad branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Among specialists already trained and working, surveys carried out in Kazan (1967), Ufa (1970), and Leningrad (1970) found that roughly one-third were the children of specialists (31 per cent in Leningrad, 33 per cent in Ufa, and 37.5 per cent in Kazan). In other words, the percentage of specialists with specialist parents was more than double the share we would have predicted based on their percentage of the workforce as a whole. These findings are important, because someone working as a technical specialist in the late 1960s would have been born no later than the late 1930s. That is, these were children born to the first generation of Soviet specialists trained under Stalin—yet already, even at its birth as a social group, it proved able to pass its privileges on to its offspring.[5] This incipient tendency was to become even stronger during the 1970s and 1980s, as the completion of a full secondary education became the norm for all children, but was not matched by a comparable expansion of places in higher education. With more working-class children now qualified for higher education entry, they found themselves at a marked social disadvantage compared to the children of the intelligentsia.[6]

Let us examine the evidence for this in more detail. We start with a deceptively simple little table provided by E. K. Vasil'eva as part of her extensive study of Leningrad youth during the mid- to late 1960s. At the time Vasil'eva did her research it was still relatively rare for all Soviet schoolchildren to receive a full secondary education. This situation was to change markedly under Brezhnev, a development that caused its own serious social tensions and which we discuss at the very end of this chapter. In the 1960s, however, children attended secondary school up to grade 8 (age 14 or 15), at which point they could either leave to take a job, move on to vocational education, or take an exam which, if they passed, would grant them entry to the final two years of secondary school, grades 9 and 10. If they succeeded in entering grades 9 and 10, they were virtually assured of gaining a place at a university or other institute of higher education—which in turn would guarantee them a job in the intelligentsia. Vasil'eva studied the correlation between the exam pass rates for eighth-grade students and their parents' occupations. The Soviet school system used a 5-point grading scale. The cut-off for advancing to grade 9 was 3.5 points out of 5.[7]

For all its simplicity this table (reproduced here as Table 29.1) was fairly devastating in what it showed. A high-achieving child of semi-skilled or unskilled parents had less chance of moving to grade 9—and from there to higher education and a privileged job—than a less able child of better-educated and more affluent parents. Even the children of skilled manual workers were at a disadvantage compared to the children of the intelligentsia. Remember, these results were from the 1960s, when the USSR's social structure was still relatively fluid, yet they already suggest the emergence of reproducible class differences.

Early sociological studies showed this same trend in other ways. It was a peculiar feature of Soviet society that skilled industrial workers often earned more in money terms than did lower- and mid-level managers and technical specialists (economists, chemists, engineers) in the same factory, a fact that during the 1970s and 1980s was one of the chief grievances of the lower and middle ranks of the Soviet intelligentsia, whose members believed that they were not receiving the full range of privileges to which they felt their superior education entitled them. However, it was an equally important feature of Soviet society that, as

Table 29.1 Percentage of eighth-grade students advancing to grade 9 by academic achievement and parental occupation, Leningrad, mid-1960s

	Percentage of eighth-grade students moving to grade 9 with grades above or below 3.5	
Socio-occupational group of parents	below 3.5	3.5 and above
Employees in jobs requiring higher education	77	89
Employees in jobs requiring secondary specialized education	50	80
Skilled workers	38	69
Semi-skilled and unskilled workers and clerical employees in jobs not requiring special training	19	41

Table 29.2 Percentage of different social groups owning core consumer goods, Novosibirsk, late 1960s

Consumer goods	Directors of research institutes, schools, hospitals; senior research personnel	Low-skilled workers and service personnel
radio	100	87
washing machine	90	75
sewing machine	75	80
television	68	80
bicycle, motorcycle, or motor scooter	50	40
refrigerator	85	52
library (more than 100 books)	90	25
vacuum cleaner	68	10
piano or accordion	45	8
automobile or motorboat	22	8

a shortage economy, money on its own had only an indirect bearing on your standard of living. If you did not have 'connections' to those people or institutions that could provide you with scarce goods, your money was worthless. You could not acquire the goods that you needed. This explains why, during the Soviet Union's last decades, workers had built up huge monetary savings in the State Savings Bank: they did not have the connections or the influence to translate their money into the acquisition of goods. What this meant is that, even where the intelligentsia's money wages were lower than those of the workers under them, they still had superior access to consumer goods and housing. Murray Yanowitch cites one study of the higher intelligentsia and low-skilled manual workers in Novosibirsk during the late 1960s, which produced these results (see Table 29.2).[8]

The reason why sewing machine ownership was so high, especially among low-skilled workers, is that, given the scarcity and very poor quality of ready-made clothing in the USSR, most people made their own clothes out of bolt fabric and kept their clothes serviceable through constant repairs. People with 'connections', that is, the higher intelligentsia, could gain access to better-quality ready-made clothing and were under less pressure to make their clothing themselves. To this extent, *non-ownership* of a sewing machine was a sign of higher wealth, although we must stress that the differences here are minor. For other key consumer goods, such as refrigerators and vacuum cleaners, goods which substantially improved the quality of life but which the Soviet Union manufactured in very small quantities, the intelligentsia had a clear advantage.

This trend emerged even more clearly in studies of housing. Throughout the USSR's existence there was a deep and chronic shortage of housing. It was most extreme during the Stalin years, when large numbers of urban dwellers still lived in dormitories and barracks, and few people outside Moscow and Leningrad had access to indoor plumbing, sewerage, or hot water.[9] Even after the huge expansion of house-building under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, most Soviet town dwellers had to live in shared communal

Table 29.3 Percentages of families from different occupational groups living in separate apartments, various Soviet cities, 1960s and 1970s

Location and year of study	% age of each group living in separate apartment
Urals industrial enterprises, 1967:	
workers	46
engineering-technical personnel	77
Kazan, 1967:	
skilled workers	16
personnel in skilled mental work	41
Leningrad machine-building factories, 1970:	
unskilled workers	20
skilled workers	24
engineering-technical personnel and other specialists	33
managerial personnel	54
Survey of 'typical cities', 1970	
workers	34
engineering-technical personnel	84
other intelligentsia and clerical employees	53

flats, with a single family occupying just one room. Those lucky enough to have their own apartment had to make do with very cramped quarters, usually just one room, plus a small kitchen and a separate bath and toilet. Yet no matter how small such a self-contained flat may have been, the improvement in the quality of life that came with hot and cold running water, central heating, and indoor sewerage was almost unquantifiable—not to mention the psychological impact of having some degree of privacy for the very first time. What Soviet sociologists found was that in city after city, intelligentsia families were far more likely to have their own separate flat than the families of workers. Again, I shall borrow from the work of Murray Yanowitch to illustrate this point, using a table which he compiled from a number of separate Soviet studies (see Table 29.3).[10]

The data presented so far indicate that the intelligentsia, including industrial managers, had clear preferential access to consumer goods, housing, and advanced schooling. In some ways they are all the more remarkable because they come not from the very end of the Soviet period, when the inequalities in the society were fully institutionalized and almost totally transparent, but from the years just after Khrushchev was in power, a period that saw a marked narrowing in income inequality but not (or so our data suggest) inequality in overall material living standards.[11] All this implies that intelligentsia and managerial personnel were able to reproduce their status by passing their privileges to their children—in short, that the social stratification in the Soviet Union became reproducible and inheritable.

It is interesting to contrast this situation with China during the Mao and early reform eras. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions here, because, unlike the USSR, there is very little sociological literature on inequality in China for these years, but what evidence

there is suggests that gross inequalities were much more modest. Being a Party official brought some material benefits, in the form of slightly higher incomes and living space. According to Zhou, under Mao there was little to differentiate the lifestyles and living conditions of Party cadres from ordinary workers or their own subordinates. Even as late as the 1980s, income inequality in China was measurably lower than in Eastern Europe.[12] Contrast this with Kravchenko's description of how Soviet managers lived in the mid-1930s, quoted earlier. If we focus on our central point—the extent to which Party officials or the intelligentsia could pass their status and privileges to their offspring—the picture is slightly different. In China, as in the USSR, Party officials and those with advanced education were better able to ensure similar outcomes for their children, but not to the same degree. The picture in China is complicated by the turbulence of the Cultural Revolution, which closed down the bulk of Chinese higher education and banished large numbers of young urbanites to the provinces, including the children of Party cadres and the Chinese equivalent of an intelligentsia. This created a hiatus in the process of social stratification, which gathered pace only from 1978 onwards.[13] Nothing comparable took place in the Soviet Union, where social stratification and the emergence of inheritable privilege progressed along a more or less steady path from the 1920s onwards.

All of this still leaves open the question, through what mechanisms were the elite and the intelligentsia able to transmit their privileges to the next generation? The question is especially apt for the Soviet Union, where the emergence of inherited class structure was already discernible at a time when there was still considerable, although rapidly decelerating, social mobility. Under capitalism where individuals have legal titles to private property, the wealthy can bequeath their wealth to their children. This, of course, is not the only method by which the ruling class reproduces itself from one generation to the other—cultural capital, personal influence, and the purchase of elite educations also play a large role—but it remains important. The son of a major corporation executive may lack the ability to manage a similarly large corporation, or indeed the ability to manage anything at all, but no matter how devoid of intelligence and skill he may be, his bankers and investment counsellors will ensure that he will still live an affluent lifestyle, as will his children and grandchildren. In the USSR, by contrast, there was no private ownership of the means of production or of major assets. Neither a factory manager nor the country's top rulers owned a single factory, farm, or bank. They could not buy or sell them, either individually, or as a group. Privileges came not with ownership of wealth, but with the jobs these people had. We have already described the privileges that the director of a major industrial enterprise or a top official in the Communist Party received. Yet both of these people would lose every one of these privileges if, for some reason, they lost their jobs because they either performed badly or fell into political disfavour. Even the country's top leaders would lose most (but not all) of their lavish privileges if politically disgraced. Similarly, not a single one of these people could pass on their wealth to their children directly through inheritance. The only way to pass on privileges was indirectly, by using influence and connections with other people in high places, and most importantly of all, by ensuring that their children received a superior

education and, as a result of this, a better chance themselves to enter into the top echelons of the occupational hierarchy. In effect, privileged access to higher education became a substitute for inherited wealth.

Inequalities Within the Labouring Population

The discussion thus far has examined the most fundamental division within Soviet and Soviet-type societies, that between their ruling elites and the mass of their populations who produced the goods and services from which these elites drew their privileges. These were not, however, the only important social divisions. Within the working population there were measurable inequalities that ran along a number of different fault lines: gender, ethnicity, geographical location, and levels of skill, to cite some of the most important.

Rural–Urban Inequalities

At the time of their respective revolutions, both Russia and China were backward countries whose economies rested overwhelmingly on small-scale peasant agriculture. In both countries their initial waves of industrialization caused a generalized crisis of both urban and rural living standards, culminating in mass famine. As living conditions in the towns gradually improved, there opened up a growing chasm between town and village, with the latter becoming repositories of intense poverty. This was not a spontaneous process, but the product of deliberate government policy, although the objectives of policy differed in the two countries.

Stalin viewed the peasantry as an infinitely exploitable resource for accumulation. When harvests failed, as in 1932 and 1946, he was willing to denude the countryside of grain in order to feed the towns and/or build up state grain reserves in anticipation of a possible international emergency. In both cases the result was mass famine. For the whole of the post-war period, right up until Stalin's death in 1953, labour day payments to collective farmers, both in cash and in kind, were close to nil.[14] The plight of the peasantry was deepened by the almost total neglect of rural infrastructure. It was Khrushchev who finally took decisive steps to alleviate rural poverty, by raising the prices the state paid the collective farms for grain, removing restrictions on peasant private plots and the sale of surplus produce from the plots, and converting the most non-viable collective farms to state farms. The latter move immediately lifted millions of peasants out of poverty, since, unlike the collective farms, which were legally cooperatives and whose members were not state employees, the state farms were state enterprises, and the farmers who worked them received a wage, a pension, and social welfare

benefits. Despite the meagreness of both the pay and the benefits, the improvement in rural welfare was dramatic. Under Brezhnev agricultural living standards rose even more markedly. The main factor depressing rural welfare was less to do with official state remuneration policies and more to do with the endemic inefficiency and lack of incentives that plagued Soviet agriculture right up until the USSR broke up. The Soviet countryside remained a dismal place to live. The farms, whether collective or state, found it difficult to retain a viable workforce, since the main aspiration of any peasant teenager was to move to a town for work or study at the earliest possible opportunity.[15]

Stalin's First Five-Year Plan saw a massive movement of peasants out of the countryside and into the towns. As with the industrial revolutions in Britain and continental Europe, Soviet industrialization depended on this influx of peasants to provide the labour power for its construction sites and factories. At the start of industrialization the regime made no attempt to confine peasants to the collective farms, but positively encouraged their movement. It imposed restrictions, including the denial of internal passports to collective farmers, only in December 1932, after the exodus from the impoverished farms became so great that the farms themselves were in danger of suffering from labour shortages and the regime was becoming increasingly alarmed at massive urban overcrowding.[16] After the war, when the collective farms were badly depleted of able-bodied male labour power, many returning soldiers of peasant origin refused to go back to the farms. The haemorrhage accelerated after Stalin's death, so that in 1970 there were barely more than half the number of young adults aged 20–9 living in rural areas of the USSR than there had been in 1959.[17]

Equally important from the point of view of this chapter, this rural–urban migration was a primary channel of social mobility in Soviet society. During the 1930s the common pattern was for a peasant to find a job on a nearby construction site, whence, having acquired basic skills as a worker, they might move to a job in industry. Their children would either become workers or, if they showed talent or could work their way into the local Communist Party, move up into the bureaucracy or receive training as a specialist, thus entering the ranks of the lower intelligentsia. In the 1960s, when the pace of social mobility had slowed down and its scope had considerably narrowed, such upward mobility might take one or two generations, but it was still fairly common.

This situation contrasts sharply with the way the Chinese authorities treated urban–rural migration. The demographics of Chinese industrialization, where the growth of urban industry could not absorb new entrants to the workforce even from the towns themselves, much less from the countryside, led the Chinese to impose extraordinarily strict controls over population movement through a rigid system of household registration known as *hukou*. Designed to keep rural migrants out of the towns, it condemned the rural population perpetually to being the most impoverished and under-supported section of Chinese society. Every aspect of life, from ration entitlements to education, depended on the location of one's registration, and rural provision was markedly inferior to that provided to the towns. Despite the strongly pro-peasant rhetoric of the Chinese Communist Party, and despite the fact that it came to power with peasant support, the party consistently pursued a policy that favoured the cities. By 1978, urban per

capita incomes were 2.6 times higher than rural incomes (and this does not include the non-monetary benefits of urban residency, including free or subsidized housing, food, health care, and education).[18] Aside from the abject poverty of the farmers themselves, it also led to a highly segmented non-agricultural workforce, divided along rural–urban lines. As late as the 1980s, rural residents working outside agriculture could find employment only in small-scale rural commune industries or as strictly temporary contract labour on a building site or an industrial enterprise. Crucially, they remained tied to their village commune, from which they drew their income. Equally important, it was impossible for them to change their registration status and find work permanently in a town.[19]

As China moved further towards rampant, fully-fledged capitalism, overall income inequality increased dramatically, so much so, according to Khan and Riskin, that within a few short years China went from being one of the most egalitarian societies in Asia to one of its most unequal. Perhaps paradoxically, rural–urban income disparities actually narrowed in this period, albeit slightly. China's rural poor remained at the very bottom of the social ladder, so much so that, despite the yawning gap between super-rich and poor in China's cities, the single most effective measure that the Chinese authorities could have taken to alleviate overall societal inequality would have been to shift resources to the countryside and raise rural incomes.[20]

Inequality within the Urban Workforce

Although they did so in different ways, both China and the Soviet Union created marked hierarchies between different branches of industry and different categories of industrial enterprise. For the people who worked in them these hierarchies were vitally important, since their money incomes and the incomes they received in kind (housing, scarce foods and consumer goods, certain social welfare benefits) derived from them.

In sharp contrast to the Soviet Union, in pre-reform Chinese industry state-owned enterprises accounted for only around half of all industrial employment, although they produced a much larger percentage of overall industrial output (just under 80 per cent in 1978).[21] These workers enjoyed a range of 'privileges' from which the rest of the industrial workforce was almost totally excluded: far higher money wages, including various bonuses and supplements; more or less guaranteed lifetime employment; extra rations and the right to buy food at subsidized prices; factory-provided housing, medical care, childcare, and schools for their children. The rest of the urban workforce were employed either as temporary workers or as permanent workers in so-called urban collective enterprises, neither of which enjoyed incomes or privileges even remotely approximating those in state industry; nor did they have any realistic possibilities of changing their status and being offered a permanent job in a state enterprise.[22]

In the Soviet Union, where virtually all workers worked in state enterprises, the hierarchies were organized along different lines. Industries were ranked according to strategic importance. Defence industry was the most privileged, and its workers enjoyed pay

and working and living conditions not afforded to even the most favoured workers in non-defence factories. Within civilian or mixed industries (much of large-scale industry carried out some defence-related production), workers in heavy industry enjoyed higher wages, better food supplies, better availability of consumer goods through closed factory distribution systems, better housing, and easier access to (but not necessarily superior delivery of) medical care. Even within a given branch of industry, a worker's standard of living depended on his or her factory's location. Moscow was the best-supplied city in the Soviet Union, with Leningrad the next most favoured. Outside the two capitals, there was a clear disparity between enterprises located in a major industrial centre and those sited in the smaller towns of its surrounding *oblast'*. Workers in Sverdlovsk, for example, were measurably better off than workers in Nizhnii Tagil, Kamensk-Ural'skii, Serov, Revda, or the other smaller towns of Sverdlovsk *oblast'*, even though these were home to large and strategically important factories. The Sverdlovsk workers had higher wages, better housing, far better urban amenities (paved streets, sewerage, access to clean drinking water, cinemas, libraries, clubs), and better health care. Up until the late 1950s the *oblast'* towns showed markedly higher rates of infant mortality than the regional metropolitan centre.[23] There were exceptions to this pattern: after the liquidation of Stalin's labour camps, the authorities had to offer workers in the far north, such as the coal fields in Vorkuta, very high wages and promises of preferential supplies in order to entice them to work there.

Disparities in wages and working and living conditions depended not just on branch of industry and location. They also reflected clear vertical hierarchies within the industrial enterprise: skilled versus unskilled; production workers versus auxiliary workers; men versus women; and workers locally born and bred versus migrants brought in from the poorer regions. It is upon the issue of gender that we wish to concentrate here, because it cuts across most of these other dualities. The discrimination which Soviet women suffered in employment and the home is well documented. Domestically there was a very sharply delineated division of labour, whereby women assumed the overwhelming responsibility for running the home, including in many cases even repairing the furniture (a traditionally 'male' preserve). Time budget studies from the Khrushchev years right through to the end of perestroika presented one and the same picture. A woman's domestic responsibilities increased dramatically after marriage, and even more so with the birth of children. Only when the children grew up and left home did this burden begin to decline. We can state bluntly that for most Soviet women the acquisition of a husband was equivalent to having another child. What the time budget studies cannot convey are the strains and even violence of many domestic relationships: coping with the man's drinking, physical abuse, and the violence of male language. Children of both sexes were socialized into such a division of labour at an early age. Studies of young girls and boys carried out in the 1960s showed that well before they became teenagers, girls and boys began to adopt quite distinct roles within the home, with the girls being groomed to do domestic labour and the boys being equally 'trained' to see their female siblings as servants.[24]

In the workplace women experienced both horizontal and vertical segregation. As in the West, there were specific industries and services which were almost exclusively

female: textiles, the garment industry, food processing, commercial laundries, and other areas of light industry; large parts of light engineering; and, of course, retailing. In all cases these sectors were the lowest-paid. Vertical segregation was just as dramatic. Where women worked in the same industries, workshops, or even in the same trades as men, they found themselves marginalized into the lowest wage and skill grades. Even in textiles, skilled manual jobs such as fitters, tool-setters, or electricians were primarily done by men. Where male industrial workers could expect to rise up the skill and wage ladder with seniority, women remained concentrated in the bottom grades, irrespective of how long they had been at their job or even of how much additional training and skill enhancement they had done.

Female employment within Soviet industry differed from Western patterns in certain crucial aspects. Women performed the bulk of non-mechanized, low- or semi-skilled 'heavy' jobs, many of which involved working in hazardous conditions—for example, in foundries. In the West employers used women to impose the de-skilling and cheapening of jobs: skilled males would be displaced by mechanization, which would then be operated by low-paid women. In the Soviet Union we saw the reverse: when manual jobs were mechanized women were moved off them and their places were taken by men. The reason is easy to understand. It was difficult to attract men to do low-skilled, heavy, or hazardous work. Once such jobs were mechanized, however, they became more attractive, and men received them as a privilege. Industrial managers had strong incentives to perpetuate this system. On the one hand, the investment needed to mechanize, modernize, and render safe the vast number of manual jobs within Soviet industry was expensive and might even prove unreliable once installed. It was far cheaper to hire women workers, even if managers had to pay them wage supplements for doing heavy and unhealthy work. On the other hand, if such jobs did for whatever reasons become mechanized, male workers had greater bargaining power with line managers, and giving them less labour-intensive jobs was one way to retain their cooperation.

Until 1949, in most areas of China it was exceptional for women to work much in the fields. By the late 1950s it was quite normal. At same time, strong forces operated in agriculture to make women's contribution to farm work marginal. During the Great Leap Forward, the government put a lot of emphasis on equal pay for equal work, but women continued to work fewer days per annum than men and often did lighter, less well remunerated jobs. Calculating work points was difficult at the best of times because of issues of quality as well as quantity of work, but men often resisted attempts to correct modes of calculation that discriminated against women. Official ideology said that women would be liberated through participation in productive labour, yet urban women were often unable to get jobs or were the first to lose their jobs. During the 1950s the regime had some success in encouraging women into the urban workforce, but their entry was limited by lack of skills, family burdens, and prevailing attitudes that discriminated against women. By 1959, there were 8.25 million 'regular' women workers and employees, but this represented less than one-fifth of the total. Moreover, some 3.75 to 4 million of these women were employed in street factories and lacked the job security and perks of workers in the state sector. Thus, as in the USSR, Chinese women under Mao entered the wage labour force, but were concentrated in low-paid, low-status, gender-specific jobs.[25]

Conclusion

It is worth remarking that Stalin and Mao had almost diametrically opposed views on the role of inequality within their respective systems. Stalin's encouragement of inequality and sharp social stratification was overt and blatant. Mao, in contrast, in his own crude way was a staunch opponent of Soviet-style stratification, and his fear of creeping 'revisionism' was a major factor in his decision to launch the calamitous Cultural Revolution. Yet in the end the two systems did not wind up looking terribly different.

Conceptually, it is the Soviet case that is the most interesting, because its social stratification became fully formed without the wholesale recourse to capitalism. These inequalities were key to the system's survival but at the same time sources of its intrinsic instability. The ruling elite relied heavily on the social support of the intelligentsia and the latter's perception of itself as separate from, and socially superior to, the working class by virtue of its education and professional importance. Yet by the Brezhnev years the intelligentsia openly chafed at what it saw as the meagreness of its privileges and material advantages. It craved for the introduction of a market economy. The elite sympathized with this view, but feared, correctly, that the introduction of a market would undermine the entire structure from which its hold over the system—and its own privileges—derived. Gorbachev thought that he could pacify the intelligentsia by offering mild forms of democratization and limited market-style reforms, his so-called 'market mechanisms'. The experiment failed and the system collapsed instead. The great irony for the intelligentsia is that the new Russian capitalism they had so intensely sought had little place for them. The 1990s saw a catastrophic collapse in their status and living standards, in comparison with which their Soviet privileges looked like a golden era.

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CHAPTER 30

NATION-MAKING AND NATIONAL CONFLICT UNDER COMMUNISM

ADRIENNE LYNN EDGAR

Karl Marx was no friend of nationalism. In the classical texts of communism, love of nation is incompatible with the proletarian revolution. As suggested by the *Communist Manifesto*'s famous slogan, 'Proletarians of all lands, unite', the most important identity for an individual was socio-economic class, not nationality. Workers were supposed to have no fatherland and to feel kinship, instead, with their proletarian brothers and sisters around the world. Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, believed that the global rise of capitalism had already begun to erode national differences and antagonisms; the inevitable victory of the proletariat would cause them to disappear entirely.

Yet the states that came into being under the banner of Marxism in the nineteenth century were forced to reach an accommodation with nationalism. The Soviet Union, the world's first communist state, was a vast multi-ethnic empire that included more than a hundred different national and ethnic groups. One of the most fundamental problems it faced was how to rule this diverse population according to communist principles. Other multi-ethnic states that underwent communist revolutions after the Second World War, among them China and Yugoslavia, were likewise forced to find solutions to the 'national question'. How did communist leaders, given so little concrete guidance by the founders of their ideology, come to terms with this problem?

One time-honoured solution to such an ideological dilemma is to reinterpret the ideas contained in the original texts, and this is precisely what Marx's early disciples did. By the time communist revolutionaries came to power for the first time in Russia in 1917, the relationship between communism and nationalism had changed. Vladimir Lenin and his fellow Russian communists had recognized the power of nationalism and the need to incorporate it into the structure of any future communist state. This change in perspective was partly due to developments in the more than half-century since the

Communist Manifesto was written. During this period, instead of vanishing as Marx had predicted, nationalism had become a mass phenomenon whose power could not be denied.

Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, Lenin and his comrades had written a number of polemics on the 'nationality question', criticizing the tsarist empire as a 'prison house' of minorities and calling for self-determination for all nations. The war only confirmed the correctness of Lenin's approach. Workers of all nations went to war for their own countries, firing without compunction at their proletarian brothers of different nationalities. The end of the war, moreover, saw the break-up of empires and the emergence of a number of new nation-states. To a far greater extent than Marx and Engels, the Bolsheviks lived in a world in which nations and nationalism were inescapable realities. The marriage of communism and nationalism that resulted from their efforts significantly shaped the seven-decade Soviet experiment and influenced the fate of nearly every other communist state.

Like many other fields within the historiography of world communism, the study of nationalities and nationality policy in the Soviet Union has been revolutionized since the late 1980s by the collapse of the Soviet state and the opening of formerly secret archives. Prior to the disintegration of the USSR, Western scholars had limited access to sources about Soviet history and research in many regions of the Soviet periphery was difficult, if not impossible. At the same time, there was a natural tendency to focus on the communist leadership in Moscow as the key to understanding the highly centralized Soviet system. These factors combined to produce a neglect of non-Russian nationalities by most historians and Sovietologists. Those who did write about Central Asia, Ukraine, the Baltic, or the Caucasus tended to be marginalized within the profession, dismissed as having parochial or even chauvinistic interests in their subjects. Among those Western scholars who studied 'Soviet nationalities' (a term commonly used to refer to non-Russians) during the Cold War, most held highly negative views of the communist regime as a 'breaker of nations'.[1] The communist regime, they believed, was in reality a Russian-dominated empire imposing its Marxist agenda on restive minority peoples.

This situation began to change in the late 1980s, when the nationalist activism of the perestroika period created a surge of interest in the non-Russian regions of the USSR. Access to new sources and the rise of a post-Cold War generation of scholars have yielded a new view of the multinational Soviet state. Historians now argue that the Soviet regime itself was in many ways a 'maker of nations', not simply an oppressor of minority nationalism.[2] Through its creation of territorial republics based on ethnic criteria, the Soviet state institutionalized national consciousness among its numerous non-Russian minorities. In this sense, the Soviet solution to the 'nationalities question' contributed both to its long-term survival and its ultimate demise.

Since 1991, new research based on previously unavailable sources has been conducted on virtually every national republic and region of the former USSR, as well as on the formulation of nationality policy by the communist leadership in Moscow. The result has been not just a reinterpretation of the history of 'nationality policy', but also an expanded view of the Soviet experience as a whole. For much of the Soviet period, 'Russian' and

'Soviet' were used almost interchangeably, while the Russian experience was seen as the Soviet 'norm'. Thus, many works that claimed to be about *Soviet* history were in reality focused on the Russians. The increased attention to non-Russians in recent research has begun to broaden scholars' understanding of how the Soviet state functioned and how people throughout the USSR experienced communist rule.[3]

The two other multi-ethnic communist states discussed in this essay, China and Yugoslavia, began by following the Leninist model in their approach to nationalities. They, too, recognized the need to accommodate national sentiment, promising territorial autonomy, national equality, and cultural development to their constituent nationalities. Like the Soviet Union, they faced continual tensions and an ever-shifting balance between the national and the international, between the drive for autonomy and the imperative of centralization. Though based on the same premises, 'nationality policy' played out very differently in these three countries.

Marxism and the National Question—The Ideology

The founders of communism were clear in their expectation that national differences were destined to disappear. In a famous passage of the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels wrote:

> National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto. The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster.[4]

Yet the two theorists were ambiguous about exactly when these differences would disappear altogether, and elsewhere they argued in support of national self-determination for nationalist movements that were politically 'progressive' in nature and that related to 'historic' nations of significant size, such as the Irish and the Polish. This left open the possibility for future disciples of Marx to shape nationality policy to the needs of their own time and place. Several generations of Marxists would parse his writings and argue over what would be a properly Marxist approach to nations and nationalism.

The Austro-Hungarian Marxists in the late-nineteenth-century Habsburg Empire were among the first to weigh in with a revisionist view of the nation. Leading Austro-Marxists Karl Renner and Otto Bauer argued that nations—even small ones—were an inherent part of the human social landscape and would continue to exist under socialism. The Austro-Marxists devised a theory of 'extra-territorial national autonomy', which stipulated that members of national groups within a multi-ethnic state, regardless

of where they lived, should regulate their affairs through their own autonomous cultural institutions. National rights, in other words, would not be linked to a particular territory. This was a potentially effective solution for groups that were territorially dispersed or lacked a territory of their own.

The Russian Marxists, who like the Austrians were hoping to foment revolution in a large multi-ethnic empire, were passionately interested in the 'national question' and discussed it extensively before 1917. Some Russian Marxists, most notably those belonging to the Menshevik faction, favoured Austro-Hungarian ideas of extra-territorial autonomy. The so-called left-wing Bolsheviks opposed the idea of catering to national sentiment; they saw nationalism as inherently reactionary and assigned greater importance to class than to nation. Yet it was the position of Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Russian communists, that ultimately prevailed. Lenin urged the party to support the right to self-determination of all nations—a plank that was included in the 1903 party programme but remained controversial. He believed that special concessions to the non-Russian nationalities were essential, but he also favoured a unitary and centralized state, rejecting both extra-territorial autonomy and the left wing's refusal to accommodate nationalism at all. Lenin asked the Georgian communist Joseph Stalin, who later became the Bolsheviks' first commissar of nationalities, to write a pamphlet outlining the Bolshevik position on nationalities in 1913.

The result was 'Marxism and the National Question', an essay whose definition of the nation shaped views in the Soviet Union and other communist states for much of the twentieth century. For Stalin, a nation was a 'historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological makeup manifested in a common culture'.[5] This definition shared the Austro-Marxists' conviction that the nation was a relatively permanent feature of the social landscape. Yet Stalin rejected the idea of extra-territoriality, insisting that a nation had to be associated with a particular territory and proposing a system of autonomy for national territories. What this autonomy would mean in practice would be worked out after the Bolsheviks came to power.

Lenin had a provocative view of the relationship between Russians and the other peoples of the empire. In his view, Russian nationalism—the nationalism of the former imperial nation—was a form of 'great-power chauvinism' that should be suppressed, while the nationalism of formerly colonized peoples deserved support and sympathy. Lenin believed that any attempt to suppress the national identity of minority groups within the Soviet Union would backfire, leading them to oppose the communist regime. Moreover, promising self-determination to the minority nations, including the right to secede from the union, would help to compensate them for their past oppression at the hands of the tsarist empire. In a socialist state, Lenin maintained, nations would not choose to exercise their right to secede. This distinction between 'oppressor nation' and 'oppressed nation' nationalism was a hallmark of early Soviet thinking on nationality.

In Bolshevik thinking, a conciliatory approach towards national minorities was intimately linked to relations with the colonial world. Lenin was determined to win the support of colonized peoples for the Russian Revolution. The acquiescence of the

oppressed peoples of the Russian Empire was particularly crucial, since this could help the Bolsheviks to win and retain power, but the support of the colonized peoples of Asia and Africa was also important. Lenin believed that it was the exploitation of overseas colonies that was helping to prop up capitalism and delay the inevitable socialist revolution in Europe. Thus, communist support for national liberation movements in British, French, Dutch, and other European colonies would hasten the arrival of world revolution. An accommodating policy towards the national aspirations of the colonized peoples of the Russian Empire, moreover, would go a long way towards persuading other colonized peoples of the sincerity of the Bolsheviks' intentions.

Nations in the USSR—Marxist Ideas Put into Practice

The Soviet Union inherited its vast territory and ethnic diversity from the Russian Empire. When the Bolshevik revolution came in October 1917, it threw the entire territory of the empire into chaos. Fighting for the survival of their regime in a brutal civil war, the new Bolshevik rulers lost control of most areas outside the Russian heartland between 1918 and 1920, including Ukraine, the Transcaucasus, the Baltic regions, and Central Asia. Eventually, however, the victorious Bolsheviks managed to put the empire back together again, with the exception of a few regions (Finland, the Baltic States, and parts of Poland) that temporarily or permanently eluded their grasp. Remarkably, the Bolsheviks managed to reassemble the Russian Empire at a time when its counterparts—the Habsburg and Ottoman empires—had fragmented into a host of new nation-states.

The Bolsheviks' success was, of course, in large part due to their successful use of military force and political manipulation. Yet one should not underestimate the role played in this achievement by Lenin's 'nationality policy'. In contrast to the ill-conceived Russificatory policies of the late tsarist empire, one of the first acts of the new Bolshevik regime was to issue a decree promising self-determination to all the nations of the now defunct Russian Empire. This policy won the Bolsheviks critical support in non-Russian areas. Their opponents, a diverse collection of monarchists and other anti-communists known collectively as the Whites, were mostly based in non-Russian areas along the periphery of the empire. Many were Russian chauvinists who treated the non-Russian nationalities with contempt and envisioned a resurrection of the Russocentric tsarist state. Thus, Bolshevik advocacy of self-determination won at least the passive support of national minorities in many regions and helped to bring victory for the Red forces. By 1922, the Bolsheviks had managed to integrate most of Russia's former borderlands into their revolutionary state. On 30 December 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was created.

From the very beginning, the principle of nationality and the idea of self-determination were embodied in the structure of the Soviet state. The Soviet Union

was officially a federation formed out of ethnically defined territories, each named after a 'titular nationality'. The primary components of this federation were the union or national republics, officially called Soviet Socialist Republics or SSRs, all of which were located along the international borders of the Soviet Union. Lesser in size and importance were the autonomous republics (mostly smaller republics within the boundaries of a union republic), provinces, and districts, which were intended to fulfil the national aspirations of smaller minorities within the union republics. The Russian republic, the largest of the union republics, was itself a federation containing smaller ethnic territories. According to the Soviet Constitution of 1924 (and every subsequent version until the collapse of the USSR), the union republics were sovereign and free to secede from the union. In reality, they were never permitted to exercise this right. Genuine sovereignty for the republics would have clashed with the principle of a centralized party-state, which was non-negotiable for the Bolshevik leadership.

Yet while Soviet nationality policy denied true self-determination to the non-Russian peoples, it made a number of significant concessions to national sentiment. In particular, the Soviet regime encouraged national equality and the development of each nation's national culture. The idea was that fostering diversity would eventually lead to unity; if nations were free to develop their own cultures, they would more quickly and willingly merge into a single Soviet socialist 'family'. Thus, in contrast to the tsarist regime, the Bolsheviks did not try to force Russian language and culture on unwilling minorities. The centrepiece of Soviet nationality policy in the 1920s was a policy known in Russian as *korenizatsiia*, most often translated as 'nativization'. This policy granted each nationality the right to use its own language and be administered by its own national elites on its own territory. The pragmatic assumption behind this policy was that people would accept the Bolshevik message more easily if it were expressed in their own languages. Thus, Uzbeks and Ukrainians would more easily absorb the wisdom of Karl Marx if they were able to read his works in Uzbek or Ukrainian translation. In the words of a slogan that originated in the 1920s, the cultures of the non-Russians would be 'national in form, socialist in content'.

Under nativization, the Soviet government required the use of the titular language within the state institutions of each republic and the protection of minority languages. In non-Russian republics and regions, children were to be educated in their own languages. At the same time, the regime made zealous efforts to recruit members of the local nationality within each republic into higher education, the communist party, and the government. They resorted to quotas to ensure the inclusion of members of 'backward' nationalities. Because of these policies, one historian has written of the 'chronic ethnophilia' of the Soviet regime, while another has dubbed the Soviet Union the 'world's first affirmative action empire'.[6]

In order to carry out nativization policies, the Bolshevik rulers needed accurate information about the diverse population over which they ruled. Soviet 'ethnographers' (cultural anthropologists) fanned out to every corner of the Soviet Union's vast territory, studying the ethnic and linguistic characteristics of the inhabitants of every republic and region. The 1926 Soviet census identified 172 different Soviet peoples.[7] Nationality

became an important part of every Soviet citizen's 'official identity', and was inscribed in internal identity documents beginning in 1932. Books were published in dozens of different languages; even tiny minorities within each republic had the right to their own schools, theatres, and newspapers. Only the Russians were excluded from this nation-making frenzy, their national sentiments dismissed as 'great-power chauvinism'.

The policies of nativization were often a challenge to implement. Some regions had no schools at all, or only the religious schools common to pre-modern societies. In these regions, the Soviet regime had to build a modern, secular school system virtually from scratch. Other Soviet peoples had no written or standardized languages. Soviet linguists had to help devise alphabets for these languages before textbooks could be written or national newspapers established. The preferential recruitment of locals into party, government, and educational institutions was difficult in regions with low levels of education and literacy, such as Central Asia and the North Caucasus.

Despite these seemingly insurmountable obstacles, some progress was made in carrying out nativization in the 1920s and 1930s. Locals were recruited into the party and state apparatus and native-language newspapers, textbooks, and schools were established. The more the state pushed nativization, however, the more it exacerbated ethnic conflict. The titular nationality within each republic naturally favoured nativization and wanted it to proceed as quickly as possible. Indigneous elites were often disappointed with the rate of progress in this realm, accusing ethnic Russians of sabotaging the policy by refusing to hire locals and declining to learn local languages. In Turkmenistan, for example, there were frequent complaints about bureaucrats who would refuse to accept peasants' petitions written in the Turkmen language, demanding instead that they submit the paperwork in Russian. In grocery shops in the cities, one Turkmen newspaper reported, 'Peasants who don't know Russian can't buy what they need, and are even afraid to go into the store, for fear they'll be scolded'. Meanwhile, Russians and other Europeans complained that ethnic Central Asians were poorly qualified for the positions they sought. One Russian agronomist insisted that a job opening at his state farm 'should be filled by a literate and intelligent Russian. Placing an illiterate and undeveloped national minority person in this position is not desirable—they won't be able to handle the work. I categorically protest against this.'[8] Opposition to Leninist nationality policy clearly still existed within the Communist Party.

Nativization might be viewed as the positive, constructive side of Soviet nationality policy, but it was accompanied by policies that were destructive and violent. Nations had to be built precisely as the Soviet leaders in Moscow envisioned them. Non-Russians who had dissenting ideas about their nations—for example, those whose version of nationality included religious belief, or who simply preferred to develop their 'national culture' without outside interference—were accused of 'bourgeois nationalism' and faced imprisonment or worse. The Soviet regime pursued drastic policies to modernize non-Russian areas they considered backward and bring them into the Soviet mainstream. The Stalinist 'revolution from above', including the collectivization of agriculture and the elimination of 'kulaks' (rich peasants), was carried out in non-Russian regions just as vigorously as in the Russian heartland. Moreover, any aspects of traditional

culture that failed to fit the Bolshevik vision of modernity were targeted for destruction. Religion came under attack throughout the Soviet Union, as did traditional practices such as polygamy and veiling in Muslim regions. Ways of life considered backward, such as pastoral nomadism and hunting and gathering, were targeted for elimination, however well suited to their environments they may have been. Often the outcome was catastrophic, as in the case of the nomadic Kazakhs, who were forcibly settled on collective farms in the early 1930s. This disastrous policy caused a devastating famine in which more than one-third of the ethnic Kazakh population perished. Those Kazakhs who survived were left helpless and dependent on Soviet authorities—an 'achievement' one scholar has recently termed 'Sovietization through hunger'.[9]

The Return of the Russians

Beginning in the mid-1930s, there was a shift in Soviet nationality policy. The Stalinist state began to move away from the blanket condemnation of Russian nationalism and to describe the Russians as the 'leading nation' of the Soviet Union. (Ironically, Stalin himself was a Georgian, not an ethnic Russian.) The revival of Russocentrism under 'high Stalinism' was part of a broad retreat from revolutionary culture that took place in the late 1930s and 1940s. This 'Great Retreat' also witnessed a resurrection of traditionalism in education and the arts and a new appreciation of 'bourgeois' institutions such as the traditional family.[10]

The Second World War reinforced these changes. Stalin recognized that love of the Russian motherland was a far more reliable motivating force than Marxism-Leninism for the peasant soldiers of the Red Army. Thus, Stalin's speeches during the war evoked the glories of medieval and imperial Russian military heroes, who had been scorned in the early Soviet years as defenders of a doomed feudal order. International tensions and war also brought new suspicions that certain non-Russian ethnic groups were hostile to the Soviet state. Ethnic Germans, Chechens, Koreans, and others were deported en masse to remote regions of Siberia and Central Asia beginning in the mid-1930s, on the assumption that they were real or potential spies and traitors. After the war, the Stalinist state continued to emphasize the Russians' role as the 'leading nation' of the USSR and 'elder brother' to the other Soviet nationalities, while launching xenophobic campaigns against 'bourgeois nationalism' and 'cosmopolitanism'. Lenin would have been appalled.

Despite the revival of Russocentric discourse, certain trends begun as a result of the Leninist nationality policy of the 1920s continued in the post-war era. Nativization remained official policy, though pursued with slightly less vigour, and over time it resulted in the rise of new indigenous elites in the national republics. Locals came to dominate education and cultural life as well as the state and communist party structures of their home republics. Overall, scholars have shown, the national republics became more 'national' over time—in other words, dominated by their own 'titular populations'. In Central Asia, Russians and other Slavs continued to dominate the state and

communist party elite in the early 1950s. By the 1970s, indigenous nationals held the majority of leadership positions in these republics.[11] The growing dominance of the titular nationalities was intensified by migration trends in the post-Stalin period. Except for the Russians, who as the 'imperial nation' tended to move and settle throughout the Soviet Union, Soviet citizens increasingly preferred to remain in their own republics. There were practical as well as sentimental reasons for titular nationals to stay home, where they received preferential access to jobs, universities, and communist party membership.

Thus, the waning decades of the Soviet Union saw two seemingly contradictory trends take hold. On the one hand, Soviet nations were becoming increasingly entrenched in their own territories, in large part thanks to the very success of 'nativization'. As Ronald Suny has pointed out, the republics had become nation-states in nearly every way except the possession of genuine sovereignty.[12] They had institutions essentially identical to those that existed on the all-union level in Moscow. They had their own academies of science, universities, museums, newspapers, theatre companies, and communist parties. They even had legions of scholars dedicated to studying their own national culture and history. On the other hand, with the presumed arrival of 'mature socialism' under Communist Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev (1964–82), Soviet leaders and nationality theorists were increasingly predicting the 'drawing together' and 'merging' of the nationalities into a single 'Soviet people'. The Soviet people was not envisioned as a nation, exactly, but as a 'new form of human community' in which diverse peoples would be united by a shared history, a common way of life, and the use of Russian as a lingua franca.[13] Far from fulfilling this prediction and merging with their neighbours, however, Soviet nations in the Brezhnev era seemed to be becoming more distinct and more entrenched within their own republics. In fact, the institutional emphasis on nationality in the Soviet Union had the effect of undermining the salience of a Soviet identity. Every individual in the Soviet Union had a single 'nationality', permanently inscribed in his or her passport. Even children with multiple identities, such as the offspring of mixed marriages, had to choose a single one for official purposes. People could not declare themselves 'Soviet' by nationality.

Yet some people clearly did feel 'Soviet'. As one ethnically mixed woman said of her parents, a Kazakh man and Russian woman who married in the 1960s, 'I wouldn't really call it a mixed marriage. They were both Soviet people.'[14] There was no inherent contradiction between being Soviet and being national. Just as there are Japanese-Americans and Cuban-Americans who identify strongly with both parts of their identity, historians of the late Soviet era are finding that many Soviet citizens identified strongly with both their national heritage and the Soviet Union as a whole. Yet the state, for reasons both ideological and pragmatic, had prioritized national identity. The supranational 'Soviet' identity remained vague, aspirational, and lacking in institutional expression. Moreover, the internationalism of a 'Soviet' identity was undermined by its frequent conflation with 'Russianness'—a tendency that was evident in the promotion of Russian as the Soviet lingua franca, as well as in the equation of a modern, Soviet lifestyle with Russian or more broadly European ways of doing things. (A 'Soviet' lifestyle meant eating

while seated at a chair and table instead of on the floor, wearing European-style clothing instead of 'native dress', and so forth.) This overlap of Russian and Soviet rendered 'Soviet' identity significantly less appealing to many non-Russians. In the Brezhnev era, the state stepped up its efforts to make non-Russians learn the Russian language, imagining that this would help to meld the Soviet nationalities into a single 'Soviet people'. In retrospect, it seems to have been too late for such a move. The new language policy provoked resistance in some of the more nationalistically inclined republics, most notably Georgia, Lithuania, and Estonia, paving the way for the rise of nationalist opposition movements in the late 1980s.

For many years, nativization was a highly successful policy. The support for local languages, national cultures, and elites helped to promote stability in the Soviet republics. Many non-Russians had a vested interest in the Soviet system, since they owed their educations and positions to Moscow. In many cases, 'national' elites found that they had more in common with their counterparts in Russia and other republics than with the peasants and workers in their own republics. At the same time, the Soviet state had failed to create a compelling Soviet identity that could transcend national interests. As the Soviet economy slowed down in the 1970s, local elites came to resent central decrees favouring Russian over local languages or requiring them to adopt policies that destroyed local environments. Increasingly, they felt frustration with their lack of control over the fate of their home republics. Because many people identified most strongly with their nations, especially after decades of nativization, nationalist movements were often more appealing than any other form of protest for people who became disillusioned with communism. In this manner, Soviet nationality policy had unwittingly laid the groundwork for the explosion of nationalism in the 1980s that helped bring about the collapse of the Soviet Union.[15]

The rise of the reformer Mikhail Gorbachev as head of the Communist Party in 1985 ushered in a new era in the relationship between state and nations in the Soviet Union. His policies of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness), in particular, opened the door to serious challenges to Moscow's authority. In a number of union republics, activists responded to Gorbachev's relaxation of political constraints by forming national fronts to oppose Russification and single-party rule. By the end of 1990, most of the Soviet republics had declared their sovereignty, though they were not yet able to turn these declarations into reality. Most surprisingly to outside observers, even Russia sought to secede from the Soviet Union, with its government declaring that the Russian republic's laws took precedence over Soviet legislation. This reflected the feeling among many ethnic Russians that they had been neglected and their national development stunted within the Soviet state. Rather than enjoying the usual advantages of an imperial nation, many Russians believed they had sacrificed themselves for the benefit of the Soviet Union. In return, they had received little in the way of gratitude from the other nationalities.

In response to these challenges, Gorbachev drafted a new treaty that would give the nationalities greater independence and transform the Soviet Union from a centralized state into a loose confederation. In a referendum held in March 1991, 76 per cent

of those who voted approved of the new treaty. (Six republics declined to participate on the grounds that they had already left the Soviet Union.) The formal signing of the new union treaty planned for 21 August 1991 never took place, however. Three days beforehand, a group of Communist Party conservatives staged a coup against Gorbachev's government, the failure of which sealed the doom of the USSR. In the ensuing vacuum of power, all the republics moved to assert their sovereign status and the country fell apart. The Soviet multinational experiment was over.

China and Yugoslavia: Following in Soviet Footsteps

For nearly three decades, the Soviet Union was the only communist-ruled country in the world. As such, it was the very definition of 'communism in power'; Soviet nationality policy *was* communist nationality policy. After the Second World War, communist parties came to rule a number of other states. Many of these states were multi-ethnic and, like the Soviet Union, had to formulate an approach to dealing with their minorities that would be both effective and doctrinally acceptable. The new states for the most part relied heavily on the Soviet example as they devised their own 'nationality policies'.

The largest and most important of these new states was the People's Republic of China, where Communists came to power in 1949. There were some important differences in the nature of the 'nationality question' in the People's Republic and the Soviet Union, the most obvious of which had to do with the ethnic composition of the population. Though the People's Republic was officially a multi-ethnic state with fifty-six ethnic groups, the Han Chinese were overwhelmingly dominant, making up more than 90 per cent of the population. By contrast, Russians made up less than 50 per cent of the population of the Soviet Union. The numerical dominance of the Han may help to explain certain differences in the way China has carried out Leninist nationality policy, such as its greater tolerance for 'great-power' (i.e. Chinese) nationalism.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) followed the Bolsheviks' lead by declaring its support for the self-determination of nations in the early 1930s. Early CCP statements on the nationality question even promised non-Chinese regions such as Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet the right to form their own independent states. As in the USSR, these pledges helped the Chinese Communists to win the support of minority groups by contrasting favourably with the chauvinistic policies of their opponents, the Chinese Nationalists (Guomindang). In 1945, the future Communist Chinese leader Mao Zedong demanded that the ruling Guomindang grant self-determination to China's minorities and allow them to form a 'union with the Han people on a voluntary basis'.[16]

Like the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, though, the CCP contained many doctrinaire Marxists who disliked the idea of catering to nationalities and nationalism. By the time the Chinese Communists actually came to power in 1949, they had

abandoned certain key tenets of Leninist nationality policy. Instead of promising self-determination for all minorities, they spoke about the need to defend China as a unitary state. Unlike the Soviets, the Chinese did not formally guarantee the right to secession. They placed greater stress on promoting Mandarin as the official state language. They were much less concerned about 'great-power chauvinism' and willing to use the rhetoric of Chinese nationalism. Moreover, the Chinese Communists were not nearly as concerned as the Soviets about awarding autonomous status to every minority group, however small.

What remained of the Soviet model in China were promises of national equality and regional cultural autonomy. In a system closely modelled on the Soviet Union's quasi-federal structure, Communist China created three levels of 'autonomous' national territories, the largest of which corresponded roughly to the union republics in the USSR. Eventually, the People's Republic had five 'national' autonomous provinces, in addition to twenty-one non-ethnically defined provinces. As in the Soviet case, national territories in China were fully integrated into a highly centralized party-state. Non-Han nationalities were guaranteed the right to educate children in their own languages and to preserve and develop their national cultures. The Chinese regime also practised a form of 'nativization' by promoting indigenous languages and elites into bureaucratic jobs. Along with the concepts of regional autonomy and nativization, the Chinese Communists borrowed other ideas and practices from the Soviet Union. The concept of nationality in China relied heavily on Stalin's famous definition. As in the Soviet Union, every citizen of Communist China had an 'official' nationality. Like their Soviet counterparts, moreover, Chinese anthropologists, historians, and linguists engaged in intensive study and classification of the non-Han nationalities.[17]

Chinese nationality policy has shifted along with broader political trends in the country, with the balance sometimes swinging towards assimilation and at other times towards permitting greater autonomy. As in the Soviet Union, periods of political upheaval have frequently been associated with assimilationist policies and repression of minority cultures. The 'Great Leap Forward' of 1958–61 abandoned the relatively conciliatory policy towards nationalities in favour of a more homogenizing approach. During this period, there was a new emphasis on the Chinese language as a common tongue for all citizens, while Han Chinese were encouraged to settle in minority areas in order to 'civilize' the natives. At the same time, the state stepped up its assault on traditional ways of life. These harsh policies provoked strong opposition in several minority areas, including Tibet and Xinjiang. The period of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) similarly saw a drive towards uniformity in national minority areas, with intensified persecution of religion and campaigns to eradicate traditional cultures. After the fall of Mao, the situation improved once again for China's nationalities. A new 1982 constitution guaranteed minorities the right to use their own languages and to be administered by members of their own nationality. Nevertheless, several minority regions were restive in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, ethnic and religious consciousness seemed to be on the rise in China in the 1990s, though the integrity of the Chinese state was not seriously threatened.

Communist Yugoslavia represented a different variation on the Soviet model. Yugoslav nationality policy, too, borrowed a great deal from the Soviet example, but as time went on the Yugoslav communists came to emphasize national autonomy and equality to an even greater extent than the Soviet Union. The country became progressively more decentralized before ultimately disintegrating in the Yugoslav civil wars of the 1990s.

Yugoslavia came into being after the First World War, when a number of southern Slav nationalities were united in a single 'southern Slav' (Yugoslav) kingdom. The creation of this state was an attempt to address the nationality conflicts that had made the Balkans the 'tinderbox of Europe' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Yugoslav kingdom was ultimately weakened by competing nationalisms which made it vulnerable to Nazi conquest in the Second World War. The 'second Yugoslavia' that emerged after the war was a communist-ruled state under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, a key figure in the resistance to Nazi occupation. Unlike most Eastern European communist countries, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia had adopted communism independent of Soviet influence and did not need Red Army troops to prop up its government. Tito soon broke with Stalin to pursue his own version of communism. Ultimately, the Yugoslav system came to differ rather sharply from communism as it was practised in Moscow-dominated countries. Though it was a single-party state that did not countenance political opposition, Tito's Yugoslavia was much less repressive than Stalin's USSR. The Yugoslav state featured a more decentralized economy, relatively free travel for its citizens, and greater openness in cultural and intellectual life.

Yet in 'nationality policy', post-war Yugoslavia hewed closely to the Soviet example. Like the Soviet Union, communist Yugoslavia was nominally a federation but in reality—at least in the early years—controlled by a centralized communist party. The six republics and two autonomous provinces in Yugoslavia were officially equal, competing for benefits and favour from a central government personified by Tito. Tito, an ethnic Croat who identified strongly as a Yugoslav, sought to ensure that no single nation dominated the country. By means of a complex system of affirmative action and quotas, the federal government distributed positions in the bureaucracy according to nationality. Yugoslavia's tendency towards decentralization may have been facilitated by the lack of a single, overwhelmingly dominant nation in Yugoslavia. The Serbs, the largest group, made up less than 40 per cent of the population. Within communist Yugoslavia, the Serbs were dispersed among various republics, and thus lacked a territorial base that would have allowed them to dominate others. In an additional safeguard against the accumulation of power by a single nation, the leaders of the two largest republics, Serbia and Croatia, were not allowed to hold major positions in the federal government. Thanks to these measures, many people prior to the late 1980s saw Yugoslavia as a state that had succeeded in solving its 'national question'.[18]

Yet this apparently successful state had problems concealed within its structure. Over time, the policies of national equality and autonomy turned the republics into quasi-independent fiefdoms. Party members tended to spend their careers within their native republics, which had the effect of creating loyalty to individual republics rather than

to the country as a whole. Citizens had no choice but to identify primarily with their nations—Serb, Croat, Slovene, etc.—since nationality was the basis for the allocation of benefits such as government jobs. Accordingly, 'Yugoslav', as a supranational state identity, had little relevance for most people. Titoist ideology maintained that one could be both Yugoslav and a member of one of the country's constituent nations. Official policy in the 1950s called for the creation of a Yugoslav identity. But as the nations became increasingly entrenched within their respective republics, this idea fell out of favour. Nationality was institutionalized, but a broader supranational identity was not. In the Soviet Union, national elites were perhaps equally entrenched within their republics, but many of them identified at the same time with being 'Soviet'. In Yugoslavia, this appears not to have been the case; in fact, it was reportedly said of Tito that he was the 'only real Yugoslav'.[19]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, movements for greater national autonomy emerged in several of the Yugoslav republics. The Titoist regime repressed these movements, but responded to their concerns by adopting a new 1974 constitution that decentralized the country, making Yugoslavia into a 'semiconfederation of semisovereign republics'.[20] Only foreign policy and the military were under federal control. Tito's death in 1980 made this system unworkable. Within each republic, communist elites had built a national power base. In the late 1980s, they began to use nationalist rhetoric, banned under Tito, as a way of gaining popular support. As in the Soviet Union, a declining belief in communist ideology left a void that was filled with nationalism. Tito's emphasis on the nation as the fundamental building block of society had left people with only the nation to believe in.[21] In the end, the Yugoslav system bolstered national identity and loyalty in ways that were quite similar to the Soviet Union. With the republican leaders increasingly pursuing narrowly nationalist interests, and without a strong central government to rein in extremists, the balance among the republics could not be maintained. The result was the destruction of Yugoslavia in a violent civil war.

Conclusion

What can we conclude about the relationship between communism and nationalism, and specifically about patterns of nation-making and national conflict in communist countries, based on the cases discussed in this essay? For all the differences among the three countries and their regimes, they clearly started out with a common approach to the 'national question' based on Lenin's reinterpretation of Marx's ideas. Self-determination, territorial autonomy, the right to linguistic and cultural development, the right to be governed by one's own national elites—these are the key concepts that have appeared over and over again wherever communist countries have sought to grapple with the problems of nationhood and nationalism. Yet these conciliatory policies towards the nation have invariably run head on into the framework of the centralized party-state, which places severe limits on when and how national rights can be exercised.

Each of the states examined here experienced ongoing tensions between the national and the international, between centralization and autonomy. Each oversaw the institutionalization of ethnic and national identity—in territories, in education and publishing, in party and government bodies. Each ultimately failed to create an overarching identity that would transcend nationality, though the Soviets and Yugoslavs made an effort to create such a supranational identity. (The People's Republic, with its huge preponderance of Han Chinese, found it easier to turn to the 'national' option as a unifying force.) The existence of a dominant nationality—Russian, Serb, or Han Chinese—complicated, to varying degrees, the fostering of communist internationalism within each state.

Finally, each communist state discussed here experienced a growth of nationalism and national conflict in the 1980s and 1990s, in part due to the declining salience and popularity of communist ideology. In the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, these tensions helped lead to the demise of the multinational state. No such collapse has occurred in China, yet it would be premature to say that the national question has been 'solved' in the People's Republic; after all, facile declarations to this effect were once regularly made about the Soviet and Yugoslav states. It is impossible to know whether the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav Federation would have survived had they pursued more assimilationist policies or placed less emphasis on nationality as a structuring principle of the state. However, if there is a lesson here for any would-be communist rulers of the future, it is that Lenin was wrong about nationalism. Accommodating national consciousness within state-approved institutions does not cause it to disappear, nor does promoting diversity lead to unity. Contrary to Lenin's belief, nationhood is not merely a stop on the road to socialist internationalism; it is a destination in itself.

Notes

1. This phrase is from Robert Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations* (New York: Penguin, 1991).
2. The pioneer of this view was Ronald G. Suny in *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); see esp. ch. 3.
3. As is inevitable when dealing with such a broad topic, I have relied on the work of numerous other scholars for the information and analysis in this essay. Please see the Select Bibliography for a list of the most important works consulted.
4. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1992), 23.
5. I. V. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1936), 5.
6. Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism', *Slavic Review*, 53 (Summer 1994), 415; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).
7. Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 133.

8. These examples are from Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), ch. 3.
9. Robert Kindler, 'Die Nomaden und der Hunger: Sesshaftmachung und Herrschafts durchsetzung in Kasachstan, 1920–1945', PhD dissertation, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, 2012.
10. The phrase is from Nicholas Timasheff, *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1946).
11. Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 275.
12. Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 111–12.
13. Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities*, 310–12.
14. Author's interview with Lesya Karataeva, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 19 April 2010.
15. Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 124–6.
16. Cited in Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 82.
17. For my summary of Chinese nationality policy I am indebted to the works of Walker Connor, June Teufel Dreyer, and Colin Mackerras (see Select Bibliography).
18. For more detail on the 'ethnically balanced distribution of power' in Yugoslavia, see Bogdan Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 36–40; see also Aleksandar Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: Nationalism and War in the Balkans* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), 47–52.
19. Cited in Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism*, 39. On Yugoslav versus 'national' identities, see pp. 39–40, 54–5; Pavković, *Fragmentation of Yugoslavia*, 62–3.
20. Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia*, 70.
21. Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism*, p. 55.

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PART VI

COMMUNISM AND CULTURE

CHAPTER 31

CULTURAL REVOLUTION

RICHARD KING

Writing in January 1923, a year before his death, Lenin offered a less than triumphal view of the progress made by the Soviet Union in the five years since the Russian Revolution. At the end of his essay 'On Cooperation', he presented two tasks as crucial: the reorganization of the machinery of state inherited from the tsarist regime, and the education of the peasants to ensure their participation in agricultural cooperativization. The latter goal, Lenin insisted, could only be achieved through a 'cultural revolution' to complement the political and social revolutions that had taken place. 'This cultural revolution', he wrote in the essay's final paragraph, 'would now suffice to make our country a completely socialist country.'[1]

Lenin's immediate concern was to deploy culture to persuade the Russian peasantry, the largest, least educated, and quite possibly the most stubbornly conservative sector of the population, to comply with the ruling party's plans for the transformation of a feudal society to a socialist one through the collectivization of agriculture; but his formulation of cultural revolution was to have a life well beyond that moment. Under Stalin, and throughout the communist world for much of the twentieth century, culture and the arts played an indispensable and integral role in communist statecraft, with incomparably greater intervention by the state, as both promoter and censor, than was the case in contemporary democratic dispensations. Even in times of international warfare and domestic upheaval, the leaders of communist regimes, most notably Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Kim Il Sung, were personally engaged in the sponsorship, criticism, and control of literature, the visual arts, opera, ballet, music, and cinema. In the cases of Lenin and Mao, their wives were also involved in the enterprise: Nadezhda Krupskaya in the development of Soviet cinema (hailed by Lenin as the most important of the arts) in the 1920s, and Jiang Qing in the creation of works of opera and ballet as models for all artistic endeavour in the 1960s.

After Lenin's death, the cultural policies and practices of the Soviet Union under Stalin were fundamental to the transformation of the arts under communist rule throughout the socialist world. Literary and artistic theories, and the means whereby those theories found expression, were disseminated through the other soviet republics, the nations of

Eastern Europe following the end of the Second World War, and in East and South East Asia following the victories of communist parties in mid-century civil wars. Institutions modelled on those of the Soviet Union, including ministries of propaganda and culture, academies of science and social science, libraries, and associations of writers and artists, were established under Russian tutelage by revolutionary ruling parties with no previous experience of government; students from socialist regimes in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America studied in Moscow and returned home with the knowledge and ideas acquired there; and advisers were sent to countries newly occupied by Soviet forces and, following 1949, to China, at the request of their governments. Ties were further strengthened by the exchange of delegations of writers, artists, performers, and cultural bureaucrats, and by the awarding of prizes by the Soviet authorities to musicians, writers, artists, and performers. As Nicolai Volland notes in his study of 'translating the socialist state': These prizes were understood as an acknowledgement of the performers' achievement and of the cultural traditions of their countries, but were also meant to promote them as part of a much larger entity, a common socialist culture shared by all nations of the socialist world.[2]

Lenin's call for cultural revolution, as put into practice by his successors, led to the creation of an image of what socialism should be (appearances on the ground sometimes to the contrary) and *would* be if things went according to plan; it presented a hitherto unknown form of humanity, the new socialist person, and defined its various categories; and it encouraged allegiance to the ruling communist party, and in many cases to the great leader at its head. This chapter examines the theories and the products of that cultural revolution, looking at the Soviet Union, especially in the Stalin era, and Mao-era China, and including some examples from the countries of the Warsaw Pact and North Korea. Of these, only the North Korean regime survives, under a third generation, at the time of publication, with the Chinese Communist Party having abandoned the policies of the Mao era; the exercise is thus largely forensic in nature. While I attempt to focus on commonalities in the cultures of these regimes (many of them evident in other communist states and revolutionary movements), this should not be taken to imply that there was a monolithic communist culture across space and time. Leaders of communist parties removed from Moscow were assiduous in their attempts to combine indigenous cultural traditions and historical narratives with those newly adopted; a typical expression of this would be Kim Il Sung's call for North Korean culture to 'develop our national form with socialist content'.[3] Within socialist states, challenges from outside or at home, struggles for power and changes in leadership, and political and cultural movements at the centre and the periphery, all led to rationalizations, denunciations, reversals, and adjustments, resulting in periods of relative relaxation and indulgence interspersed with times of repression and reprisal.

The emphasis here is on official culture, and the culture of states ruled by communist parties in times when the state could control the means of cultural production and mass communication far more effectively than in an age of the Internet and the cellphone, of Facebook and Twitter. This is not to deny the emotional and ideological power of

unofficial, underground, or dissident paintings, songs, dramas, poetry, and other writings; but they are not the focus of this chapter.

I look first at the historical grand narratives promulgated by communist regimes, and the location within them of the socialist age that saw their creation; then at the Soviet doctrine of socialist realism, and the images it provided of life under socialism; I provide a case study of one image of socialist modernity and emancipation; and then consider the role of the artist in the creation of socialist culture, and the rewards and hardships experienced by those who sought it; and an epilogue glances at the afterlife of communist culture, as icon, detritus, or kitsch.

A Golden Road to an Unknown Future

The culture of states ruled by communist parties was erected on a foundation of a historical narrative of predictable and inevitable progress from a past characterized by suffering and oppression towards a near future of social harmony and abundance of which the present is a foretaste, on the way to the eventual achievement of the dream of communism. In her study of the Soviet novel, Katerina Clark describes this passage as being a journey from darkness into light;[4] the Chinese novelist Hao Ran, rewriting in the early 1970s the saga of agricultural collectivization that had taken place two decades earlier, expressed the same optimistic vision in the metaphor that provided the title for his epic novel *The Golden Road*—a highway leading towards a rising sun, to a future planned for China's peasant masses by the Communist Party and its enlightened leader.[5]

The historical grand narrative places the socialist era on the trajectory propounded in the nineteenth century by the founding fathers of communism for the development of human society: from primitive communism at its earliest stages, through slavery and feudalism, thence to capitalism and imperialism, before socialist revolutions, and, in the future, onward to communism. While this teleological presentation could stretch back centuries, the crucial part of the narrative, and the one which earlier history served, concerned the revolutions that brought the ruling party and its great leader(s) to power, the purpose being to legitimize or sanctify the power of the ruling party by providing a comprehensible and coherent account of the nation's past. As Evgeny Dobrenko characterizes the historiography of the Stalin era manifested in the Soviet cinema: History is the past, constructed and served by the authorities, who are attempting to curtail the experience of the 'literal past' by packaging it into a literary narrative.[6]

Newly created histories of nations under communist rule saw the rehabilitation of former autocrats with whom current leaders identified themselves: Peter the Great, admired by Stalin for his authoritarianism, reinvented for Soviet film-goers not as tyrannical tsar but as 'hero-leader',[7] and the first emperor of a united China, Qin Shihuang, a historical figure much admired by Mao, praised for his rejection of Confucian statecraft and for his suppression of scholarly dissent (by burning books and burying Confucian scholars alive), and thus relieved of his reputation as one of the cruellest tyrants in

history. These figures from the past served an allegorical purpose in a campaign orchestrated by the Chinese media in the early 1970s: attacks on Confucius as a diehard conservative (and the supposed inspiration for Mao's chosen successor Lin Biao following the latter's downfall) and praise for Qin Shihuang's suppression of the Confucians were part of a power struggle fought by an ailing Mao and those close to him against rivals in senior government positions with more pragmatic plans for the nation's development.[8] History, however remote, evolved to serve current goals and represent ongoing factional divisions, and revised versions of the past were published in print and visual form, and placed on updated displays in museums.

Dealing with their own ascent to power, communist parties created definitive narratives that combined the teleological view of history outlined earlier with selected events to construct an inspirational mythology of nation-building. The end result was to be used for the education of the citizenry, and provide material for paintings, statues, operas, ballets, films, and works of fiction that would enshrine an authorized version of the recent past, and the role of current leaders in creating it, in the hearts of the people. The most authoritative such text was *The History of the All-Union Communist Party (Short Course)* compiled under Stalin. A final text of the *Short Course* was published in 1938, following revisions by the editorial board to accommodate re-evaluation of the role played by those of Stalin's erstwhile comrades condemned as traitors during purges in mid-decade. The *Short Course* traced the development of the Russian Revolution back to the late nineteenth century, going from agrarian populism and a social democratic phase to the emergence of Lenin as leader of the movement in the face of official persecution and factional division, resulting in the victory of the Bolsheviks in the 1917 Revolution. Lenin is seen steering the new state through civil war and foreign intervention up to his death in 1924, at which point Stalin takes over, overseeing agricultural collectivization, rapid industrialization, and the consolidation of socialism.

The *Short Course*, with its clear focus on the enlightened leadership of Lenin and Stalin, was the unquestionable source of historical truth in the Soviet Union and its satellites for almost two decades following its publication. Its account of history was proclaimed to be scientific, thus laying claim to objectivity and empirical truth.

No single document with the authority of the *Short Course* was released in China, but historical narratives likewise focused on Mao, as revolutionary, philosopher, military strategist, and statesman. In 1964, a 'large-scale music and dance epic' *The East is Red*, filmed in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, presented the history of the Chinese revolution from the 'dark old society' to the glories of the Mao Zedong era in a dramatic and emotive performance.[9] A celebrated part of the heroic narrative of Chinese liberation was the Long March of 1935–7, during the course of which Mao assumed chairmanship of the Communist Party. Recent research shows the received version of the Long March as a piece of historical myth-making which takes considerable liberties with actual events, but that myth has demonstrated considerable durability in the post-Mao era. In the last decade of Mao's life, with most of his former comrades purged, the official story of the Chinese revolution was increasingly a narrative of his struggles with enemies within the ranks of the Communist Party, with Mao an increasingly solitary figure.

These normative historical narratives, ritually repeated in school curricula, political texts, and the arts, were designed to generate what Jean Baudrillard, on the two-hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution, dubbed a 'synthetic memory that stands in place of a primal scene',[10] taking precedence over any actual records or memories. In the socialist case, synthetic memories did not survive the deaths of the great leaders at their centre. The *Short Course* lost its authority after Khruschchev's denunciation of his predecessor in 1956; China's post-Mao leadership waited until 1981 to issue a corrective to the history of the Communist Party in power that admitted to errors on Mao's part, though his civil-war heroics remained unchallenged.

The most durable of the nation-building narratives has been in North Korea, the only socialist state to have seen dynastic succession, the nation being led by the father and son Kim Il Sung and Kim Jung Il from its founding in 1948 to the latter's death in 2011 and replacement by his son Kim Jung Un. Artistic renditions of the mythology surrounding Kim Il Sung and Kim Jung Il abound in the capital and at the historical sites associated with the Great and Dear Leaders (father and son respectively), including monumental statuary; equestrian statues of the two together were unveiled in the capital in February 2012. Mosaics in the Pyongyang subway system (modelled after its counterpart in Moscow), as described by Marsha Haufler, 'constitute a large-scale, public archive of iconography for socialist parables, utopian promises and hero-worship based on "classic" revolutionary fiction and the biography of the ruling family'.[11]

Such unambiguous mythologies of national salvation by great leaders were less readily crafted for the non-Russian Soviet Socialist Republics or the states occupied by the Red Army at the end of the Second World War and later incorporated into the Warsaw Pact. Serhy Yekelchyk's study of campaigns against Ukrainian nationalism after the Second World War shows the suspicion of Soviet leaders of any glorification of non-Russian historical figures other than peasant rebels; the emphasis for the Soviet Socialist Republics was to be the celebration of a common socialist present at the expense of a separate 'national' past.[12] In cases where a national narrative was not permitted or available, a more remote past (remote both temporally and geographically) could also be employed as an allegory for the present. Rudolf Wagner's reading of historical fiction from the German Democratic Republic demonstrates that, just as historical allegory could serve state leaders in factional disputes, so it could be used by intellectuals to question official orthodoxies. Wagner cites the example of Stefan Heym's satirical novel *The King David Report*, first published in 1972; in it, the author describes a commission entrusted by the biblical King Solomon to craft a definitive history of his father's accession to power. The novel is about the writing of national myth, with disregard for fact where necessary, to assert the legitimacy of those now in power. The parallels to the *Short Course* are inescapable: both the commission's report and the *Short Course* 'refer to persons (Lenin/David, Solomon/Stalin, Adonijah/Trotsky), structure (succession, unification of the country, centralization of government, officially approved history), and textual status (holy book)'.[13] Among other details, the slave labour employed in King Solomon's mines stands for the convict labour in Stalin's Gulag.[14] These historical narratives, both the official and the dissenting, demonstrate

the power of history, and help to explain the state's assiduous guardianship of past and its wariness of heterodox interpretation.

Truth in Its Historical Development: Socialist Realism

The officially sanctioned doctrine of socialist realism dominated cultural production in Stalin's Soviet Union, and its influence extended throughout the nations under communist party rule. While the term lost its authority with de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union, and other governments introduced modifications based on indigenous traditions, the practice of socialist realism maintained its influence well beyond the Stalin era.

The term socialist realism was formally introduced by the novelist Maxim Gorky to the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934; it had reportedly been coined by Stalin two years previously,[15] and the term was already in circulation by 1933, when it was introduced in China by the leftist critic Zhou Yang.[16] As defined in the Statute of the Union of Soviet Writers, in a form attributable to Andrei Zhdanov, the Soviet official with the greatest influence on the arts in Stalin's Soviet Union, socialist realism was to bethe truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. At the same time, truthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic representation and reality must (or should) be combined with the task of ideologically remaking and training the labouring people in the spirit of socialism.[17]

This formulation incorporates ideas from earlier Marxist writings already accepted as doctrine in socialist literary theory. The insistence on 'representation of reality in its revolutionary development' recalls Engels's injunction, in his 1888 letter to Margaret Harkness, that '[r]ealism, to my mind, implies, beside truth of detail, the truth in reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances';[18] Engels's point is that historical circumstances (in this case the increasing activism of the working class) should be considered when decided what best represents reality. And 'the task of ideologically remaking…' reprises the instrumental role seen for the arts in Lenin's insistence that party literature should be a 'cog and a screw' in the machinery of the revolution.[19] The announcement of the doctrine confirmed practice already evident. Many of the novels later included in the canon of Soviet socialist realist works pre-date the conference, the earliest being Gorky's *Mother*, written in 1906 and first published the following year.[20]

Socialist realism is a profoundly, even perversely, optimistic way of presenting the world. It creates certainty from doubt, and order from chaos; it shows abundance at times of shortage; it offers a vision of unity and shared purpose overcoming social unrest; and it shows the achievement of monumental tasks against insuperable odds. The purpose of writing (or painting, sculpting, composing, choreographing, etc.) is, as Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko memorably express it, 'to systematize reality—Bolshevik experience'.[21] Its concern is the transformation of what was and is into what

should be and will be: the transformation of the ownership, management, and productive capacity of agricultural land to ensure bountiful harvests; the transformation of poor countries into industrial powerhouses; and the transformation of demoralized and impoverished societies into a proud new socialist order. Most of all, socialist realism deals with the transformation of humanity. The central figure of the nineteenth-century Russian novel had been the 'superfluous man', a complex figure adrift in the world, squandering his talents, and unable to make any telling contribution.[22] Such aimless figures were to be replaced by heroic examples of the 'new socialist person', men and women inspired, determined, focused, self-sacrificing, and confident in the rightness of the cause to which they dedicate and frequently sacrifice themselves. In such characters, 'consciousness' (awareness of the needs of the moment and the ideological training to meet them) triumphs over 'spontaneity' (the instinctive, and in socialist realist terms, generally misguided, reaction to a situation). Paintings and sculptures of new socialist men and women show them robust and powerful, in deliberate contrast to more elegant and effete images previously in vogue. The transition from works of fiction centred on 'superfluous men' to those featuring heroes of socialism was not without its challenges; the Hungarian literary critic Georg Lukács was among those who questioned the feasibility of the undertaking.

The same transformation attempted in Russia was required by the communist leadership in China as it turned away from the more subjective, westernized styles of the May Fourth new culture movement of the early decades of the twentieth century.[23] In Yan'an, the capital of the communist base area between 1937 and 1945, cultural policy was a significant consideration for the communist government in waiting. In his 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art', delivered in 1942, Mao Zedong defined for Chinese artists what was expected of the arts under communist control.[24] Though no record remains of the contributions of other speakers at the forum at which Mao gave the opening and closing speeches, he was clearly responding to issues raised by proponents of more westernized, subjective, and independent expression than he was willing to approve.[25] At the outset of his concluding speech he defined the crucial issue as 'the problems of working with the masses and how to work for the masses'.[26] The 'masses' Mao defined as workers, peasants, and soldiers, adding to them the revolutionary cadres in his introduction and the petite bourgeoisie in his conclusion. In terms of how they were to be served, Mao emphasized political criteria: the arts were to be subordinate to politics and serve goals defined by political leaders. (In the 'Talks', Mao cited Lenin's 'cog and screw' metaphor.) While acknowledging the need to raise the cultural level of the audience, Mao insisted that culture should be at a level accessible to the current population of the base areas, mostly peasants with minimal formal education; he saw no use for creative impulses that were 'feudal, bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, liberal, individual, nihilist, art-for-art's-sake, aristocratic, decadent, pessimistic'.[27] Mao did not use the term socialist realism in his 'Talks', but his expectations were similar to those expressed by the authorities at the 1934 Congress in Moscow. Concerning the relationship between life and art, Mao's elegant and optimistic characterization echoes that of Zhdanov in the criteria for the selection of artistic content: Life as reflected in a work of art can and should

be even more lofty, even more intense, even more concentrated, even more typical, even more ideal, and thus even more universal than actual everyday life.[28]

In this passage Mao uses the customary metaphor of reflection to describe what realist writing does. Lenin had praised Tolstoy as 'the mirror of the Russian revolution', though he and Tolstoy were of very different political persuasions, and an interpretation of Tolstoy's work from a Leninist view of history needed to be provided for later readers in socialist states.[29] The artistic mirror envisaged by Mao is one that displays underlying truths that also require an enlightened decoding, in this case by the vanguard leading the revolutionary classes whose members would be its audience. Perhaps a more fitting metaphor for the educative and instructive role of the arts of socialist realism might be not reflection, but projection, with a mirror used in the cinema projector not to reflect the image back towards the viewer, but away, forward into the darkness, providing an illuminated and illuminating vision of the world ahead.

The world that appeared on the screen of socialist realism could be expected to feature positive images of new socialist people in moments of fulfilment and achievement. In an appendix to her study of the Soviet novel, Katerina Clark offers a summary of the 'master plot' of one kind of socialist realist fiction, the production novel, 'the most common type of Stalinist novel *by far*' and 'also the most highly ritualized'.[30] Feodor Gladkov's novel *Cement* was the pioneer in this genre, and later works adapted *Cement*'s basic structure, albeit with considerable flexibility in the ordering of the component parts. The master plot is a hero's journey, within which Clark identifies six stages: *Prologue*, in which the hero arrives at the locality which stands as a microcosm the larger world; *Setting up the Task*, in which the hero identifies problems, proposes solutions, and mobilizes support; *Transitions*, in which difficulties arise and the hero must seek guidance; *Climax*, in which an additional crisis threatens the project and shakes the hero's confidence; *Incorporation* (or *initiation*) where a Party member provides encouragement; and *Finale*, where the task is completed and celebrated, sacrifices are commemorated, and the torch is passed.

The plots are formulaic (as are, for example, those of Western detective and romance, and Asian revenge stories), the specificities of location, character, and incident being relied upon to attract reader interest. These specificities, and the local colour they provide, were frequently drawn from the experience of the author (as war hero, land reform activist, industrial worker or manager, etc.). The author's background could be made explicit in the promotion of the work, both for readers at home, and when the work was translated and disseminated through the socialist world, providing an aura of authenticity; the predictable nature of the plot allowed readers to identify with its socialist message. Perhaps the most successful work of fiction at conveying individual experience (of civil war and national reconstruction) and yet making it universal was Nikolai Ostrovsky's novel *How the Steel Was Tempered*, a model work about a model life (the author's and the hero's);[31] Katerina Clark notes that 'from the mid-thirties on, the consensus of Soviet criticism [was] that [the novel's hero Pavel] Korchagin is *the* positive hero in Soviet literature, *the* model figure for the Soviet people to emulate'.[32] Pavel, who destroyed his health in the course of his service, was a model for communist youth in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China;[33] a similarly autobiographical homage to Ostrovsky

by a Chinese veteran and industrial worker was inspired by a visit to Ostrovsky's home and a meeting with his widow.[34]

The novels, films, dramas, and visual images of socialist realism were transparent in their ideological orientation, and were not to open themselves to any reading other than the ones intended by their creators and sponsors. Their readily accessible and definitive lessons were not to be disrupted by techniques that might cloud their meaning. The insistence on transparency accounts for the hostility expressed by the proponents of socialist realism to modernism (notwithstanding the participation of the modernists in the visual arts during the early years of the Soviet Union); the same hostility can be seen in the comments by Mao on 'creative impulses' quoted earlier. Much as authors and artists may attempt to preclude alternate readings, however, the venture cannot succeed. No art based on ideology or faith can close itself entirely to meanings other than the intended one; these works depend on audience sympathy, or at least amenability to concurrence, with the point of view expressed in them, and those without such prerequisites are unlikely to find themselves inspired or persuaded.

Picturing Socialism: A Case Study

The Soviet novelist Alexander Fadeev told a group of foreign visitors that socialist realism 'shows life as it is, and simultaneously life as it should be'.[35] In socialist art we see socialism imagined by the artist on behalf of the state, the intersection of the aesthetic and the political.[36] Only in socialist art did socialism truly exist as it should, the current state of affairs always lagging behind. The arts showed audiences at home how the life of socialism should be, and how they should comport themselves; at the same time, the arts advertised socialism in their nation to the world beyond as a reality.

A single case study, that of woman and tractor, must suffice to represent the better world that socialism offered. It will be presented in the context of its history in the Soviet Union and China, with an example drawn from an art form that was key to the state's communication with the people—the political poster.

The 1971 Chinese poster *Struggle for the Rapid Realization of Agricultural Mechanization* depicts a female mechanic; the characters printed on her overalls identify her workplace as an agricultural machinery repair and maintenance factory.[37] She is powerfully built, with broad shoulders and strong forearms; the hands that clasp the wrench and the fingers that adjust it are large. Her face ruddy, her eyebrows full, and her hair carelessly unkempt, she looks forward unselfconsiously and flashes a broad smile revealing perfectly white and barely delineated teeth. She exudes competence and confidence in her abilities. Behind her others are working on a range of agricultural machinery, but she and her tractor take pride of place. It is an inspirational socialist realist image of progress towards modernity and emancipation.

For peasant societies used to subsistence farming in the earlier art of the twentieth century, the tractor represented the way to a future of easier, faster, and more abundant



FIGURE 31.1 The struggle for the rapid realization of agricultural mechanization

agricultural production. Given the capacity of the tractor (and later the combine harvester) to work large plots of land, it was suited to the larger units combined in collectivization, and was used to persuade those unwilling to give up individual ownership to join the collectives.

The emancipation of women, and their addition to the labour force, was a priority for the Soviet and Chinese leaderships as they diverted large numbers of peasants to industry, organized large-scale construction projects (such as dams and canals) in the countryside, and still demanded ever-greater harvests of staple foods. Showing women in prestigious occupations was a means to promoting this emancipation, and no occupation was more promoted than that of the female tractor driver. In the Soviet Union, the 1930s was the decade of the female tractor driver as the icon of modernity, through a campaign that Melanie Ilič dates as beginning on 8 March (International Women's Day) 1930. On that day, an industrial newspaper carried a cartoon divided into two, each depicting a young woman, one a degenerate sophisticate slumped over a spilled glass of wine, the other, in complete contrast, 'a joyful young woman, head held high, driving a tractor'.[38] Another drawing of a smiling female tractor driver appeared the same day in the newspaper *Izvestiya*. During the decade, tractor-driving labour heroines were selected, the first being Pasha Angelina. Glamour was added to heroism with the release in 1939 of the film *Female Tractor Driver*, which was extensively shown in the socialist world in the subsequent decades. The female tractor driver also featured in Soviet political posters of the 1930s: a study by Victoria Bonnell notes that, in a radical departure

from earlier representations of women in Soviet posters, 'out of 106 propaganda posters relating to agriculture between 1930 and 1934 that include pictures of women, 37 (35%) depict women behind the wheel of a tractor'.[39]

For all the promotion in the popular media and the praise lavished on model workers among them by Stalin himself, Melanie Ilič concludes that female tractor drivers were 'little more evident on the Soviet rural landscape by the end of the decade [of the 1930s] than they had been at the beginning'.[40] As with much of the life of socialism depicted in the arts, the rise of the female tractor driver was more projection than reflection. Lynne Attwood's comment in her history of Soviet women in film that 'the myth of women's equality was propagated in the films of the Stalin era as ably and as glibly as the myth of the Soviet paradise',[41] applies equally to posters.

Like its Soviet counterpart, the Chinese state after 1949 made extensive use of the political poster as a means to communicate with its people. The subject matter consisted of heroic portraits of the leader, reconstructions of past events in line with current historiography, promotion of current slogans and campaigns, commemorations of heroes and martyrs, and (most significantly for the purposes of this chapter) representations of life in the new socialist China. As Kuiyi Shen finds in his analysis of poster production in Shanghai, these latter posters created a world parallel to lived experience, embodying the ideals of the state.[42] Life in an idealized rural China was an important subject of poster production, instructing newly collectivized peasants as to the roles they should play in production, family relationships, social interaction, political participation, and national defence. From the 1950s, the female tractor driver was as iconic a figure as she had been in the Soviet Union twenty years before, in part because of the popularity in China of the Soviet film *Female Tractor Driver*. Photographs and paintings were featured in the Chinese press, one photograph of a female tractor driver in a wheat field appearing on the back cover of the English-language journal *China Reconstructs* in 1952.[43] The Chinese equivalent of Pasha Angelina as pioneer tractor driver was Liang Jun, whose image graced the 1-yuan banknote in the 1960s and 1970s.

As had been the case in the Soviet Union, a substantial number of Chinese posters featured women and tractors. A poster of Liang Jun from the early 1950s shows her sporting her model worker's rosette and standing in front of her tractor; a line of female tractor drivers in a 1960 poster wave to their children in the kindergarten that has freed them from household chores; and in a 1962 poster in the folk New Year painting style, three charming village girls disport themselves on a tractor in a fecund melon-patch.[44] Viewed chronologically, posters of women and tractors also chart a transformation of the ideal female form from the 1950s to the 1970s, as reflected in the examples just discussed: the women of the earlier Chinese posters are slender and pale-skinned, those in later posters are increasingly robust and weathered.

Fewer posters from Korea are readily accessible, but the image of the female tractor driver can also be found among them. In his examination of painting in North Korea, Frank Hoffman presents this as the archetypal subject: 'Girl meets tractor—if art movements and styles had avatars, socialist realism, no doubt, would have one showing a young woman with headscarf on a red tractor.'[45]

The Artist and Socialism: Life in the Velvet Prison

Control of culture and the arts, and of the means of cultural production and dissemination, by the state meant that to be an artist under socialism was to be a state artist. The system needed writers and artists who were inspired by the socialist cause and prepared to accept direction in the creation of works imbued with the appropriate ideology and accessible to a mass audience. In the initial stages of socialist revolution, leaders accepted it as inevitable that works of art would be produced by members of existing intelligentsia and cultural elites.

The remoulding of intellectuals previously accustomed to independent critical thinking into obedient servants of the vanguard party and its often mercurial leadership was never going to be easy. In a conciliatory moment early in his Yan'an Talks, Mao Zedong gave the example of his own conversion from disdain to admiration for the working classes, but nevertheless felt obliged in his concluding address to warn his audience sternly against their previous uncommitted practices. In time, intellectuals and professionals were to be joined by members of the revolutionary classes themselves; socialist states paid attention to the nurture of proletarian and peasant artists whose works could be set in their home environment, and thus provide a more plausible picture of socialism in the factory and village.

Creating culture for a communist leadership could be fraught with danger: artists, including those devoted to the cause, could find themselves suddenly under attack for works considered (at the time or subsequently) to be subversive. Exhortations to virtue alternated with impositions of terror, and many writers and artists, with other intellectuals, suffered ostracism, humiliation, imprisonment, and death for their real or perceived disloyalty. To survive, artists needed to negotiate within the system, understanding the direction in which the political winds were blowing and the extent to which they could speak for those their works addressed without risking the censure of their political masters.

For those who did make the necessary accommodations and produced works that pleased their masters and their audiences, the rewards could be considerable—secure employment, status, and prestige as a state artist, comfortable accommodation provided with the job, and a reasonable salary. Aware of the dangers of confronting the state and thereby risking punishment and the loss of all they had, artists tended to avoid writing anything that might give offence, thereby saving the state the necessity of censoring them. The Hungarian poet and critic Miklós Haraszti referred to this cosy symbiosis as a 'velvet prison' in which writers and artists collude in their own spiritual and ideological incarceration for the benefits it brings them.[46] The artists themselves did not necessarily view their situation with such cynicism: many had joined the communists at an early age, and invested everything in the cause; after the success of their revolution, many retained their faith in their leaders, even as this belief was sorely tested. In my interviews with veteran Chinese authors of works written between the 1940s and 1970s, conducted well

after their heydays and towards the end of their lives, they presented themselves as genuine creative artists, not the compliant hacks that younger artists and critics might accuse them of being.[47] They had undoubtedly presented a falsely utopian picture of Chinese rural life, most egregiously at the time of the famines of the late 1950s and early 1960s; in this, they were mindful of the wrath that would be visited on them if they revealed what was happening, but also trusted against all the evidence that this was merely a pothole on the highway to a glorious future, and that the larger picture was more important.[48] After the event, such faith seems ingenuous at best, but it remains possible that authors were more genuinely misguided than they were cynically self-interested.

Epilogue: The Afterlife of Socialist Art

On 19 September 2011, Bulgaria's Museum of Socialist Art (originally conceived as the Museum of Totalitarian Art) opened in Sofia, following a search for the vestiges of socialism 'in every basement in every town'.[49] It displays art, insignia, and other memorabilia from forty-five years of communist rule (1944–89), with statuary displayed in a park outside. The museum, inspired by others in Hungary and the Czech Republic, has the twofold purpose of preserving a part of the nation's history and attracting tourists. A large portrait of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin hangs, bereft of menace but redolent with irony, in the museum café. For the twenty-first-century visitor, icons designed to educate and inspire new socialist men are stripped of their agitational meaning and serve as curiosities, more likely to invoke a mild nostalgia for a barely remembered and generally unlamented past than to renew bitter memories of oppression. In China, where a Communist Party still in power has abandoned most of the policies, but not all of the rhetoric, of the Mao era, the mythology and iconography of the Chinese revolution, including the face of Mao, remain, though now they can be appropriated, reinvented, and parodied by artists, including those who were active in the Cultural Revolution in the final decade of Mao's life. Julia F. Andrews concludes her overview of the art of that decade with this salutary reminder for those who consider the culture of socialism: 'That the Cultural Revolution images—happy pictures masking a tragic reality—were a fiction themselves has been forgotten. Those that survive have outlived the truth that does not.'[50]

Notes

1. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, 'On Cooperation', written 4 and 6 January 1923, <www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/jan/06.htm>, accessed 13 December 2011.
2. Nicolai Volland, 'Translating the Socialist State: Cultural Exchange, National Identity, and the Socialist World in the Early PRC', *Twentieth-Century China*, 33 (2008), 57.

3. This quotation dates from 1966. See Jane Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 27.
4. Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (2nd edn., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).
5. Hao Ran, *Jinguang dadao* (The Golden Road), vols. i and ii (Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1972, 1974); see esp. i. 498, where the title is mentioned for the first time and the hero and a comrade take the highway east into the rising sun.
6. Evgeny Dobrenko, *Stalinist Cinema and the Production of History: Museum of the Revolution*, trans. Sara Young (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 1.
7. Dobrenko, *Stalinist Cinema*, 20.
8. For a summary of the campaign to 'criticize Lin Biao and Confucius', see Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2006), 366–73. The campaign, brief as it was, required a hurried revision of sections of China's political and cultural history to reflect a protracted struggle between 'Confucianists' and 'legalists'.
9. *Dongfanghong* (The East is Red) (Beijing: 1 August [People's Liberation Army] Film Studio, Beijing Film Studio, Central News and Documentary Film Studio, 1964).
10. Quoted in Dobrenko, *Stalinist Cinema*, 8.
11. Marsha Haufler, 'Mosaic Murals of North Korea', in Rüdiger Frank (ed.), *Exploring North Korean Arts* (Vienna: University of Vienna Modern Arts Press, 2011), 275.
12. Serhy Yekelchyk, 'Celebrating the Soviet Present: The *Zhdanovshchina* Campaign in Ukrainian Literature and the Arts', in Donald J. Raleigh (ed.), *Local Dimensions of Soviet Power, 1917–1953* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 255–75.
13. Rudolf G. Wagner, 'Culture and Code: Historical Fiction in a Socialist Environment: The GDR and China', in Hilary Chung et al. (eds.), *In the Party Spirit: Socialist Realism and Literary Practice in the Soviet Union, East Germany and China* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 137.
14. Rudolf G. Wagner, 'Culture and Code'; see also Rudolf G. Wagner, *Inside a Service Trade: Studies in Contemporary Chinese Prose* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).
15. A memorandum by Ivan Mikhailovich recalls the two-word term being formulated in Stalin's study in April or May 1932. The document is included in Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko, with Andrei Artizov and Oleg Naumov (eds.), *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917–1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 163–5.
16. Zhou Yang's 1933 essay 'On Socialist Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism' is reprinted in *Zhou Yang wenji* (Collected Works of Zhou Yang) (Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1984), i. 101–14.
17. Quoted in Hilary Chung, 'Introduction', in Chung et al. (eds.), *In the Party Spirit*, p. x.
18. Friedrich Engels, 'Letter to Margaret Harkness' (1888), in David Craig (ed.), *Marxists on Literature: An Anthhology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 269.
19. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, 'Party Organization and Party Literature', 6 January 1923, <www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/jan/06.htm>, accessed 20 December 2011.
20. See Katerina Clark's 'Official Short List of [Soviet] Model Novels as Inferred From Speeches to Writers' Union Congresses', in Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 261–3.
21. Clark and Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture and Power*, p. xii.
22. The term derives from Ivan Turgenev's 1850 novella *The Diary of a Superfluous Man*.

23. The stories of Lu Xun, the senior and most innovative of the May Fourth writers, are peopled by ambivalent and self-doubting intellectuals and village characters confused by the changes taking place in their world after the fall of empire. 'May Fourth' was the day in 1919 when students demonstrated against the treatment of China at the Versailles conferences, and is often seen as a symbolic date for the awakening of Chinese national consciousness.
24. For a fuller summary of the 'Talks', see Kirk A. Denton, 'Literature and Politics: Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" ', in Joshua Mostow (ed.), *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 463–9.
25. For literary debates at Yan'an and the tragic case of the loudest dissenting voice, see Dai Qing, 'Wang Shiwei and "Wild Lilies": Rectification and Purges in the Chinese Communist Party 1942–1944', guest editors Timothy Cheek and David E. Apter, *Chinese Studies in History*, 26/2 (Winter 1992–3) and 26/3 (Spring 1993).
26. Mao Zedong, 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art' (1942), in Kirk A. Denton (ed.), *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature 1893–1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 464.
27. Mao Zedong, 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum', 481.
28. Mao Zedong, *Selected Works* (Chinese edn., Beijing: People's Press, 1968), iii. 818, translation mine.
29. V. I. Lenin, 'Articles on Tolstoy', in David Craig (ed.), *Marxists on Literature: An Anthology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).
30. Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 255–60, at 256. Emphasis in the original. In naming the plot a 'hero's journey', I acknowledge (and infer that Clark does) the resemblance these plots have to the 'monomyth' identified by Joseph Campbell in his *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2nd edn., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).
31. English translations of the novel are: *The Making of a Hero*, trans. Alec Brown. (New York: Dutton and Company, 1937); *How the Steel was Tempered*, trans. R. Prokofieva (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959).
32. Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 132–3; emphasis in the original.
33. Rudolf G.Wagner, 'Life as a Quote from a Foreign Book: Love, Pavel and Rita', in Helwig Schmidt-Glinzer (ed.), *Das Andere China: Festschrift für Wolfgang Bauer zum 65. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1995), 463–74. See also Miin-ling Yu, 'A Soviet Hero, Pavel Korchagin, Comes to China', *Russian History*, 29/2–4 (2002), 329–55.
34. Wu Yun-to [Wu Yunduo], *Son of the Working Class* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1956). The Chinese title, *Yiqie weile dang*, literally means 'Everything for the Party'.
35. Quoted in Evgeny Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 74.
36. Dobrenko, *Political Economy*, 4.
37. Poster collectively drafted by the Revolutionary Committee at Beijing Middle School 76 (Beijing: People's Fine Arts Press, 1971), collection of the author.
38. Melanie Ilič, '*Traktoristka*: Representations and Realities', in Ilič (ed.), *Women in the Stalin Era* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 110.
39. Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters Under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 106, quoted in Ilič, '*Traktoristka*', 111.
40. Ilič, '*Traktoristka*',112.

41. Lynne Attwood, 'Introduction', in Attwood (ed.), *Red Women on the Silver Screen: Soviet Women and Cinema from the Beginning to the End of the Communist Era* (London: Pandora Press, 1993), 70.
42. Kuiyi Shen, 'Publishing Posters before the Cultural Revolution', *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, 12/2 (Fall 2000), 177–202.
43. Tina Mai Chen, 'Female Icons, Feminist Iconography? Socialist Rhetoric and Women's Agency in 1950s China', *Gender and History* 5/2 (August 2003), 268–95.
44. The first two of these appear in the 'Tractor Girls' section of <http://chineseposters.net[http://chineseposters.net>. The third, from my own collection, is not currently viewable online.
45. Frank Hoffman, 'Brush, Ink, and Props: the Birth of Korean Painting', in Frank (ed.), *Exploring North Korean Arts*, 145–180, at 165. The Chinese tractor girls are typically not wearing headscarves.
46. Miklós Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison: Artists Under State Socialism*, trans. Katalin and Stephen Landesmann (New York: Basic Books, 1987). For a reading of Haraszti in the Chinese context, see Geremie Barmé, 'The Chinese Velvet Prison', in Barmé, *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 1–19.
47. My interviews were with the now deceased authors Ma Feng, Li Zhun, and Hao Ran, all of whom wrote about village life.
48. 'We believed', Ma Feng's wife Duan Xingmian told me when I interviewed her husband in 2002, 'because we wanted to believe.'
49. 'Bulgaria's Museum of Socialist Art Welcomes First Visitors', report dated 19 September 2011 on the website of the Sofia News Agency <www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=132235> viewed 1 January 2012.
50. Quoted in Julia F. Andrews, 'The Art of the Cultural Revolution', in Richard King (ed.), *Art in Turmoil: the Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966–1976* (Vancouver, BC: University on British Columbia Press, 2010), 57.

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CHAPTER 32

COMMUNISM AND THE ARTISTIC INTELLIGENTSIA

MARK GAMSA

This chapter adopts a comparative approach to the intelligentsia in the Soviet Union and communist China. Speaking of the 'intelligentsia', we are dealing with an abstraction relating to the description and self-perception of persons who, whilst having much in common, also differed in key respects. These persons shared certain characteristics with 'intellectuals'—a term with ambiguities of its own in Anglophone usage—yet in other respects they were very different from intellectuals in democratic societies as well as from one another. The chapter thus briefly addresses the problem of definition at the outset. It focuses on the 'artistic' rather than the 'scientific-technical' intelligentsia, but parts of the discussion are relevant to the latter. It proceeds to compare the creative work of artists within the two regimes, both of which were characterized by aesthetic constraints and political controls. In tune with recent research that views intellectual production as inseparable from its social practices, we go on to place artistic creation in the communist world within the context of daily life. Finally, the chapter considers the legacies left by the artistic intelligentsia of the communist age and proposes some new perspectives for studies of the subject.

Terminology

In the current Western understanding of the term, 'intellectuals' are identified as persons engaged in thinking as a profession, hence most often as salaried academics or professional writers and artists. Although being employed by state and private institutions, they are not expected to be beholden to them ideologically—insofar as in a democratic political system the ideological positions of 'the state' can be identified at all. Intellectuals are, on the contrary, expected to use their autonomous standing in order to exercise critical thought. Indeed they may be counted upon to subscribe to widely diverging opinions and are more likely to adopt sceptical attitudes towards power holders than to serve

as their loyal voice. In Russia the designation of some members of society by the collective term 'intelligentsia' has been traced to the emergence before the mid-nineteenth century of a small but vociferous elite: men of common or mixed social origins who, after going to university, gained prominence in the literary field and animated debates in the periodical press. By the 1860s the growing 'intelligentsia' (already known as such) perceived itself as an intermediary between the people, to whom it was sympathetic, and the tsarist autocracy, which it passionately opposed. From early on, the term encompassed broader segments of the population than those to whom the label 'intellectual' in English (or its near analogue in Russian, *intellektual*) could be properly attached, since it embraced educated persons in general, rather than just academics or literati. Unlike the word 'intelligentsia' in English, the Russian word exists in the singular and plural, as well as in the collective plural: respectively, *intelligent*, *intelligenty*, *intelligentsia*. And unlike the British unease with 'intellectual' as a term of self-definition—the problem Stefan Collini placed at the centre of his *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2006)—this self-identification was central to the way the Russian and Soviet intelligentsia thought about their position in society.

In imperial China education in the Confucian classics was the monopoly of the gentry, who invested heavily in their studies. For centuries, the path to state service had led through an elaborate examination system, which persisted until 1905. The first generation of Chinese youth to receive a mixture of traditional and modern education came into intensive contact with Western ideas during the 'May Fourth' movement, which in the late 1910s and early 1920s agitated for political and cultural reform. These young people, usually the offspring of gentry families, began to call themselves *zhishi fenzi*, literally 'knowledgeable elements': a calque of the Russian *intelligentsia* that was introduced into Chinese in the 1920s and has remained in use ever since. By including high-school graduates, this category covers a still wider stratum than was the case in Russia, and there is no separate term for *intellectuals* in Chinese. It is important to remember how broad this definition is, whenever *zhishi fenzi* is translated into English as 'intellectuals'.

Creative Work and Political Repression

Independent critical thinking was not tolerated in the communist system, which demanded unquestioning acceptance of the party line, postulated as the sole scientific and correct position on every matter. Instead, the intelligentsias of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China were shouldered with a moral burden: on the one hand, to prove their loyalty to the proletariat and to the people, and thus to the party that governed in their name and that was always suspicious of its better-educated subjects; and on the other hand, to provide instruction and serve as a moral example to socialist

society. The conflict between these contrasting expectations determined much of what became the predicament of the intelligentsia in the twentieth century.

In Russia as well as in China, members of the artistic intelligentsia initially took on the 'moral burden' of their own volition, having articulated a belief that art must participate actively in life and, more specifically, contribute to social and political change already prior to the establishment of the Communist state. Like the Confucian literati of imperial China, the modern Chinese intelligentsia expected to share responsibility for the well-being of the country. The question of the proper relationship between 'art' and 'life' was thus much debated, with artists searching for ways in which the two notions could be merged, the gap separating the elite from the common people bridged, and their own sense of guilt towards the masses assuaged. Following the communist revolutions, the political engagement of artists, hitherto carried out in opposition to state power, could only be channelled into the party line, while their original social commitment was redefined as a duty to serve the new system.

Above the work of artists in the Soviet Union from the 1930s hovered the shadow of 'socialist realism', a doctrine officially enunciated in a speech by the Soviet commissar of education, Andrei Zhdanov (1896–1948), at the First Writers' Congress of 1934. In China similar ideas were developed under the heading of 'proletarian realism' in equally famous pronouncements made by Mao Zedong at the Forum on Literature and Art that the Chinese Communist Party convened in its base in Yan'an in 1942. The close alliance between communist China and Soviet Russia in the 1950s led to the Chinese adoption of 'socialist realism'. In 1958, on the eve of the Sino-Soviet rift, the terminology was updated to 'revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism', but the requirements from writers and other creative artists remained essentially the same. Across the communist world, artists were required to conform to a set of rules that aimed to ensure the usefulness of their output as a tool of state propaganda. As the Soviet slogan put it, artists had to 'reflect reality in its revolutionary development', which in practice meant to describe only such 'reality' that accorded well with the image of a progressive society being led towards ever greater achievements under the guidance of the party. However, two caveats must be entered: first, that the rigidity with which these rules were enforced varied over time; and second, that to different degrees and at different times, there were alternatives to the production of sanctioned socialist art, possibilities which some among the artistic intelligentsia chose to explore. These political conditions and possibilities of escape will now be considered.

The October Revolution in 1917 was followed by a wave of emigration from Russia, which counted in its ranks numerous representatives of the artistic intelligentsia, notably, the creators, between the 1890s and the First World War, of what retrospectively became known as the 'Silver Age' in Russian culture. In the Soviet Union the 1920s were still a time of tolerance towards unorthodox creativity and experimentation as a vibrant avant-garde, inspired by the Revolution, explored and developed new directions. These included futurism in literature, the Russian take on the Italian example, which grew rapidly after 1917, with such proponents as Velimir Khlebnikov (1885–1922) and Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893–1930); the 'biomechanical' style, which Vsevolod

Meyerhold (1874–1940) introduced into theatre; 'constructivism', ranging across art and architecture, and represented by such names as El Lissitzky (1890–1941) and Vladimir Tatlin (1885–1953), and the 'montage' cinema of Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948). The screws of control were tightened by the early 1930s, however, following a 'cultural revolution' launched in 1928, in which the advocates of 'proletarian' principles in the arts were authorized to attack the proponents of less doctrinaire positions, thereby limiting the range of possible styles of expression, before they too were squelched. The Stalinist purges in 1937 and 1938 severed the living links that had connected the Soviet intelligentsia with its tsarist predecessor.

During the Second World War, the Soviet state took measures to evacuate recognized writers, artists, and composers, along with their families, from areas of the country menaced by the invading German army; yet many, including women, went to the front as soldiers, reporters, or performers and some did not return. The persecution of the intelligentsia was renewed in the summer of 1946, with the assault by the secretary of the party Central Committee, Andrei Zhdanov on the poet Anna Akhmatova (1889–1966) and satirical writer Mikhail Zoshchenko (1895–1958). The 1948 campaign against 'formalism' was chiefly aimed at the composer Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–75), while the concurrent campaign against 'cosmopolitanism' was directed at Jews. The much-awaited 'thaw' that followed the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 and the optimism engendered by Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of 'the personality cult' in 1956 gave rise to a cultural movement, in which the intelligentsia took a major part, and to a last splash of enthusiasm among the young for restoring the true ideals of communism. Such sentiments and hopes did not outlast the suppression of the Prague Spring by the Soviet army in 1968. In the years of 'stagnation' under Leonid Brezhnev, show trials aimed at reining in the alienated intelligentsia were again held, now concluded with sentences of exile and imprisonment rather than the announcement of executions.

Discussion in the press during the May Fourth period in China was saturated by a heady mix of Western political doctrines and literary currents. In an atmosphere of competition between rival prescriptions for the nation's future and between what opposing parties perceived as mutually exclusive approaches to art, the most enduring achievements in twentieth-century Chinese culture were recorded in the work of such figures as Lu Xun (1881–1936) in literary prose, Xu Zhimo (1895–1931) in poetry, and Feng Zikai (1898–1975) in painting and drawing. After the mid-1920s the positions of the radicalized intelligentsia grew more uniform, increasingly favouring the weak and embattled communists as an alternative to the ruling Nationalist Party. The Japanese invasion of northeastern China in 1931 and the beginning of full-scale war between the two countries in 1937 strengthened patriotic feeling while limiting the possibilities of intellectual dissent: the artists who had previously argued about the role of art in revolution now came to essential agreement about the need to mobilize for national defence. By accepting that protecting the national interest had priority over creative freedom they manipulated themselves into willing subservience to political power. While the Nationalists persecuted members of the intelligentsia with ties to the communists, the Communist Party, prior to the foundation of the People's Republic of

China in 1949, used violent means to carry out purges among its intelligentsia sympathizers in Yan'an.

Successive political campaigns were unleashed to streamline thinking and set the borders of permissible discourse during the 1950s: the most vehement of them targeted literary critic Hu Feng (1902–85), a former associate of Lu Xun and a committed Marxist ideologue who, however, had clashed with Mao's literary henchman Zhou Yang (1908–89). In 1955 Hu Feng was vilified in the press, expelled from the Writers' Union, and imprisoned. The Hundred Flowers Movement, launched to enable the intelligentsia to air constructive criticism from 1956 to 1957, led some Chinese writers to believe that the regime was considering a 'thaw' after the Khrushchev example. Proposals they made to replace 'socialist realism' by 'realism of the socialist era', together with outright calls to put an end to political interference in the arts, confirmed the party's suspicion that the *zhishi fenzi* were still mired in bourgeois liberalism. The consequence was an 'anti-rightist campaign' in which over half a million people, more than half of them 'intellectuals', were branded as 'rightists'. Those to whom the tag was attached, including loyal communists such as the woman writer Ding Ling (1904–86), would be reminded of it in all subsequent political purges.

Shortly before the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in summer 1966, Mao's wife Jiang Qing (1914–91) and the Minister of Defence Lin Biao (1907–71) convened a Forum on Literature and Art in the Armed Forces, at which they claimed that a 'literary black line' dominated Chinese literature: a bourgeois clique of writers allegedly opposed Chairman Mao and refused to comply with the requirements he and the party had laid down in Yan'an. Through such charges, writers were once again repressed. After party and government officials, the intelligentsia were a main target for attack in the Cultural Revolution. The possibilities for creative expression were further reduced, as from 1966 to the death of Mao in 1976 the stage art approved for presentation in the People's Republic of China was limited to the so-called eight model operas (and songs, films, and plays based on them), which under the patronage of Jiang Qing celebrated the triumph of the communist revolution. In the course of the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, only about 120 novels were published: in an apotheosis of didacticism, their fictional characters, like the heroes of the 'model operas', were either eulogized as perfectly good, or vilified as monsters. After 1976, the Yan'an guidelines on the arts were not formally abolished, but adherence to them was no longer enforced.

In the realm of literature, escape zones from the dictates of socialist realism included writing for children and translating: examples of achievement in both fields in the Soviet Union are the work of Kornei Chukovsky (1882–1969) and Samuil Marshak (1887–1964). Translation was also the occupational refuge of writers denied permission to publish under their own name. Travel writing evolved into a particular genre; authors allowed abroad as journalists or as members of a delegation produced essays and sketches that, while having to depict the maladies of bourgeois society, were written in full awareness of the eager curiosity of readers who had no possibility of travel for any glimpses into life in the 'capitalist' world, be it Western Europe, Japan, or Australia. Because of the demands for self-censorship that publishing through the official channels entailed

even before a writer would need to face the censors of the state, some chose to write for a small circle of trusted friends, for themselves or for posterity, and some 'escaped' into drink. Beginning in the 1950s and expanding rapidly in the 1960s, the circulation through intelligentsia networks in the big cities (principally, Moscow and Leningrad) of copied and retyped literary works by contemporary authors, Russian émigrés, and foreign writers that were all banned in the Soviet Union, attained sufficient volume for the word *samizdat* to enter the English dictionary. Writers also had their work smuggled out of the country and suffered the wrath of the Soviet establishment once it was published abroad.

The search for alternatives, away from the rigid dictates that operated in verbal and visual forms of art, led talented individuals to areas of intellectual and artistic activity over which the party-state exercised lesser control. For example, chess attracted numerous brilliant minds in the Soviet period (and at no point were chess masters barred from playing the English opening or the French defence; modernist ideas, officially condemned in the arts, could be explored in tournament chess). Other fields of 'escape' included: musical composition and performance (while jazz was ideologically suspect for its American origins and the atonal music of Arnold Schoenberg and his followers was denounced as incomprehensible, no nineteenth-century European composer was banned in the Soviet Union because of his 'capitalist' class background); philological and historical scholarship in areas remote from the here and now (studies of the Italian Renaissance, to give only one example, were able to flourish in the 1930s notwithstanding the obligatory emphasis on class analysis in all history writing); and pure scientific research outside the predominant framework of military industry. It was not, therefore, only because of the positive investments made by the state into these domains that so many Soviet chess players, musicians, literary scholars, and scientists achieved lasting international eminence; it was also because gifted individuals, facing oppression along the 'main road' of professional life, looked for 'side alleys' to realize their need for creative development. Censors in Russia had always bred poets.

In communist China, censorship of the arts during the Mao period allowed fewer havens of relative autonomy than in the Soviet Union and the countries of the Eastern bloc. Even European classical music and the piano could be proclaimed tools of the world bourgeoisie when, after the breakup of Sino-Soviet relations, their Chinese aficionados were no longer able to cite the Soviet example in their defence. In a campaign led in 1963 by Yao Wenyuan (1931–2005), soon to become one of the leaders of the Cultural Revolution, the focus of critical attention turned to the long-dead French composer Claude Debussy (1862–1918). Following the traditional model in which the scholar-bureaucrat retired from officialdom, writers and artists unwilling to adapt to the codes governing publishable literary fiction and presentable art 'escaped' into writing memoirs (designed in part to enhance their credentials as longstanding followers of the communist revolution), into teaching and research on classical Chinese literature and painting, or into the literati art of calligraphy. Such niches of creative independence that the intelligentsia had carved out or preserved during the 1950s were tagged as counter-revolutionary in the course of the next decade. The Chinese

communist attack on 'feudal' (traditional Chinese) and Western culture, and on all those suspected of loyalty to them, was more total and uncompromising than any comparable attack in Soviet Russia. Both Chinese and Western chess were prohibited in the PRC, as were hobbies such as collecting books or stamps. While some Chinese authors, like their Soviet counterparts, wrote 'literature for the desk drawer', the unofficial writing that reached readers was not as significant in scope or cultural weight as the Soviet-period samizdat. A hesitant relaxation of state control over culture began after Mao's death. In the 1980s the informal legitimacy conferred on literature and art outside the prescriptions of socialist realism opened the gate for new influences from the West despite continuing criticism of them in establishment circles.

Daily Life and Popular Image

The Soviet *intelligent* inhabited a cramped apartment, which in the worst variation on the theme (the 'communal apartments', in which up to five or seven families could be lodged) he or she had to share with strangers. The apartment's walls were lined with brown bookcases; on the shelves, behind moveable glass frames, were ranged *Collected Works* which the trained eye of a guest could recognize by colour without bothering to read the lettering on the spine. After being welcomed in the corridor, the guest would spend more of his or her time in the kitchen than in the living room, if a living room existed: there drink and snacks would be put on the table, cigarettes lighted, and a long conversation begin, perhaps to include a discussion of the latest issue of the literary 'thick journal', to which both host and guest subscribed, and on a less cultured note a hearty laugh over the latest political joke. At the same kitchen tables and corners of communal apartments, some wrote novels, translated, or composed music. This description may have the touch of a caricature, but the point is that there were distinct characteristics to the way the intelligentsia lived and that similarity in home environments contributed to the shaping of a common identity. The home space was also used in the Soviet Union after the end of the Stalin period for a variety of social and cultural activities that could not be carried out in public: displaying modernist art, which no museum would exhibit, hosting a closed reading evening or a concert, at which a singer would perform politically sensitive lyrics. Apartments served as the intimate stage, where the poet-songwriters known as 'bards' could first be heard before rising to nationwide fame, notable examples being Bulat Okudzhava (1924–97) and Vladimir Vysotsky (1938–80), and to which they returned with their guitars even at the peak of celebrity. To be invited to such privately organized events was a high proof of trust within the intelligentsia milieu, as informers were ubiquitous.

Cramped and substandard housing was a perennial problem of the intelligentsia under communism (admittedly, it was one they shared with many other social groups, where the average situation was worse than theirs). A film on the suffering of the *zhishi fenzi* in the Cultural Revolution and on their unrequited love for China, blacklisted

soon after its release in 1981, featured a scene showing an intellectual's windowless room, with a 'view' painted on the wall for consolation. It was a detail the scriptwriter of *Bitter Love*, Bai Hua (b. 1930), had noticed in the room of a painter and poet related to the prominent writer Shen Congwen (1902–88). Shen himself, who had refused to write fiction since 1949 and on the strength of earlier work was nominated as a candidate for the Nobel Prize for literature by his admirers in the West in the 1980s, once inhabited a room of this kind in Beijing. At the time, between 1972 and 1977, he would walk over to take meals with his wife, whose state-allocated single room was at a distance of half a mile from his own. The couple had returned to the capital after more than three years of 're-education' in the countryside. They were spared the harsher humiliation of fellow writers, who were paraded through Beijing streets during the Cultural Revolution, when 'intellectuals' were branded 'the stinking ninth class' of Chinese society.

A construct of discourse and an amalgam of late-imperial and twentieth-century presuppositions about the civic role of the educated person, the intelligentsia assumed more concrete and tangible traits once they became institutionalized in the communist state. Private associations of writers and artists had formed already in tsarist Russia, but only under communism did belonging to such organizations, now operating as part of the state apparatus, become a necessary condition for being allowed to make a living from one's work. Membership of the Union of Writers, the unions of composers, artists, architects, journalists, or film-makers, also conveyed privileges. For the select few at the top of the pyramid in each profession—not necessarily 'the best', but rather those most useful to the party—these privileges could be extravagant, including allocated city apartments, summer dachas, and frequent travel abroad that presented much-envied shopping opportunities. For the rank and file, there were smaller but nonetheless coveted perks, such as funded voyages within the country and stays in specialized writers' and artists' guesthouses, or at the more basic level of subsistence, prospects of obtaining the Union's aid for buying a winter coat. The main effects of this system (as a recent article by M. R. Zezina concludes) were to bind individuals to the regime by ties of dependence that made existence outside it impossible, as well as by elevating the titles of 'a Soviet writer', or 'artist', to saddle them with a collective identity that both offered guild-members a sense of pride and exposed them to emotional blackmail.

While such honorific titles were spawned by state rhetoric, the educated public was receptive enough to them to be ready to participate in the cult of poets and scientists, albeit not always to admire the same individuals whom the party promoted. If the artistic intelligentsia could be considered an 'aristocracy of the mind' (in official Soviet discourse, its deservedly high standing in the communist society was favourably juxtaposed with that occupied by hereditary aristocrats and millionaires in the materialistic Western world), it followed that its members should be permitted some idiosyncrasies in the realization of their creative vision. A reserved non-conformism was thus possible and even expected, although no outspoken opposition was tolerated. An aura of respect became attached to writers, such as for example Konstantin Paustovsky (1892–1968) or Vladimir Tendriakov (1923–84), who both through their literature and by their acts of non-compliance earned a reputation for being 'men of honour'. Acts of servility

fashioned the polar reputation, as illustrated by the case of poet Sergei Mikhalkov (1913–2009), thrice author of the national anthem—from Stalin through Brezhnev to Vladimir Putin. However, dividing the artistic intelligentsia into the honest and the opportunistic amounts to simplification, since some degree of accommodation to the system was required from all who lived in it; and the system, its language, rhetoric, and ideology influenced even its staunchest opponents. In China, where non-conformism was rarer, a traditional reverence towards elderly sage figures was projected from the 1980s onto such venerable survivors of the republican-era intelligentsia as novelist Ba Jin (1904–2005) and the philologist and essayist Ji Xianlin (1911–2009). The respect accorded to the writer was also due to his defiance of party policy through insistence on remembering the abuses of the Cultural Revolution, while the scholar made proof of intellectual courage by writing an essay in defence of Hu Shi (1891–1962) at a time, in 1986, when that liberal thinker, a leading light of the republican period, was still held in disgrace in the PRC for having served the Nationalist government and moved with it to Taiwan. Even more importantly, for those born into communism, Ba Jin, Ji Xianlin, Shen Congwen or their long-living coeval, the modernist writer of the 1930s Shi Zhecun (1905–2003), embodied vital links to a cosmopolitan literary age largely erased from memory after the communist assumption of power. All differences considered, there were similar grounds to the admiration of young poets in Soviet Russia in the 1960s for Anna Akhmatova, or Nadezhda Mandelstam (1899–1980), widow and memory-keeper of the modernist Osip Mandelstam (1891–1938), whose martyrdom for poetry under Stalin enshrined him in the intelligentsia pantheon.

High ethical standards were attributed not only to such celebrated symbols of the intelligentsia, but also to its ordinary members. Again both the creature of official language and an internalized popular view, this was the image of the *intelligent* as a modest person doing hard and honest work, often as a medical doctor, a teacher, or an engineer. Seen from the outside, such individuals were trusted to be guided by a moral compass that enabled them to preserve their dignity and fundamental decency. Poorly paid and indifferent to material comfort, they spent the little they earned on books and would never steal from a state that did not value their contribution. Whether earnest believers in the communist message, or (as was more common among the Soviet intelligentsia by the late 1960s) viscerally critical of the regime, they would absent themselves on the day of a public meeting called to denounce a colleague. Seen from within the intelligentsia community they were, simply, 'people of our own kind'—with the presumption of trustworthiness, rooted in a sense of social affinity, that being an *intelligent* implied.

These were the men and women of unswerving moral rectitude, to whom the writer Andrei Bitov (b. 1937), in a story called 'A Doctor's Funeral' from his *Georgian Album* (written in the 1970s but only published in the Perestroika years), referred as 'their generation: convinced that there was no God, they held up the tenets of Christianity higher than anyone else.' Avowing his inability to fathom the 'generation' he so described, Bitov was speaking here of his own aunt, a physician (Jewish, rather than Christian) and an old Bolshevik, who died, aged 'almost eighty', at the end of the 1960s. The type was also

familiar among the intelligentsia in China: whether the honest and upright builders of the People's Republic in the 1950s, or the idealistic youth who, growing up in the same decade, experienced humiliation and painful disenchantment during the Cultural Revolution. The novella, *At Middle Age* (1980), by female writer Shen Rong (b. 1935), on the unheroic daily struggles of a woman physician, has been read as a literary tribute to that latter generation.

The Legacy and Prospects

Once the political climate in the Soviet Union allowed for more active forms of resistance, some members of the artistic intelligentsia, seeking to preserve their moral integrity along with a sense of belonging to a select and conscientious community, would take part in the dissident movement. From the mid-1960s and through the 1970s, this involved lending material assistance to politically persecuted persons, documenting their judicial proceedings and, under the banner of a campaign for the protection of human rights, signing petitions and open letters in defence of ethnic minorities, particularly the Jews. The launch of Perestroika under Mikhail Gorbachev in 1988, and the political and social upheavals that followed it, occasioned much debate on the historical role and possible new destination of the intelligentsia. Those who felt they belonged to this category had always been given to soul-searching and, among the outpouring of writings then and in the years immediately following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many were strongly self-critical: some authors looked back to the complicity of the intelligentsia in the rise of the Bolsheviks, while others expressed guilt at their more recent conformism or collaboration with the Soviet system.

Nonetheless, between 1988 and 1991, the cherished dream of the liberal intelligentsia, including a minority of former dissidents who had not emigrated from the Soviet Union by that time, seemed to be coming true as their recognized leaders were given the opportunity to serve at the forefront of reform and state-building in a new Russia. In the course of the 1990s, these initial expectations gave place to a sobering realization of the limits of their power base and general appeal. For the Russian public, the ready cooperation of the intelligentsia with the Gorbachev and subsequently the Yeltsin administration, both widely blamed for bringing down the Soviet Union in conspiracy with the feared 'West', discredited any claims to leadership that the intelligentsia could still make.

It may have been due to this disappointment that artists and writers moved away from attempting to continue the dialogue they had maintained with the educated public during the twilight years of the Soviet regime and instead turned either to elitist stylistic experimentation, or the alternatives offered by the growing demand for pulp fiction and kitsch art. Meanwhile, the part of the intelligentsia that consumed literature rather than created it and which was as alienated by literary hermeticism as it was disgusted by trash, was left (so the oft-repeated complaint had it) 'with nothing to read'. In any case, they could no longer afford a subscription to the 'thick' literary journals. In a mass

culture which now rejected the reification of highbrow printed texts that had marked Russia since the nineteenth century, and which seemed no longer to consider the makers of such texts relevant as public speakers, enemies of the people, or mere arbiters of taste, reflections by the intelligentsia on its own 'fate' grew increasingly sombre. Indeed, the diminution of its status became evident in the reduction of state funding for the institutions that had long nourished the intelligentsia, such as universities and libraries, theatres and orchestras.

The policy of power holders in Russia since 2000 to reaffirm the Soviet period as part of historical continuity, rather than a 'dark hole' between tsarism and democratization as it was perceived in the 1990s, has thrown everyone, the intelligentsia and its former enemies, into a common melting pot in which all must be united by patriotic feeling. Religious belief, which had been an important haven for spiritual self-cultivation and the provider of an alternative value system for the intelligentsia from the 1960s, has been appropriated by the current regime through its alliance with the Orthodox Church. While most of those engaged with the creative arts have learned the rules of the market in a non-liberal state and made their adjustments to it (the younger generation matured directly into the system), few have been able to afford the luxury of the moral role that being an *intelligent* traditionally implied, and that the revolution of 1917 and *glasnost* in 1988 had both seemed, momentarily, to promise.

In an interview with the Moscow newspaper *Izvestiia* in Paris, where she had been awarded the Prix Simone de Beauvoir in January 2011, one of the most respected contemporary Russian writers, Ludmila Ulitskaya (b. 1943), was openly sceptical when asked how she 'regarded the intelligentsia today'. The gist of her answer was that in relation to the ethical dimension of the term that 'we still take from our past life' (i.e. from life under communism), the *intelligentsia* hardly existed anymore, being incompatible with current state 'pragmatism'. In the same interview she distanced herself from the hoary image of the Russian writer as a 'teacher of life'. Yet Ulitskaya herself is looked up to, especially by readers of her own generation, as a speaker for basic human values felt to have been eroded by the withdrawal of the intelligentsia from its educational mission and by the commercialization of Russian culture through the mass media. She sustains her reputation as a person of conscience by such acts of non-radical dissidence as her published correspondence with Mikhail Khodorkovsky (b. 1963), a former billionaire businessman imprisoned for alleged financial crime since 2005, whom Amnesty International considers a political prisoner.

The artistic intelligentsia in post-communist Russia has mainly chosen an ironic or sarcastic voice as its preferred mode of expression. In the second half of 2011 'Citizen Poet', a project originally named 'Poet and Citizen' after the title of a classical poem by Nikolai Nekrasov (1821–78), attracted hundreds of thousands of viewers on the Internet and in theatre halls across Russia following its removal from state-controlled television. The 'Citizen Poet' show was a collaboration between the text author Dmitrii Bykov (b. 1967), a novelist, publicist and biographer of poet Boris Pasternak (1890–1960), still one of the iconic figures of the Russian intelligentsia, and the award-winning theatre and cinema actor Mikhail Efremov (b. 1963), scion of a famous theatrical family.

Dressed to embody the poet whose 'work' he supposedly recited, and standing on an almost bare stage beside a blurred black-and-white portrait of the 'author', Efremov delivered rhymed verses by Bykov that paraphrased Russian and Soviet poets all the way from Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) to Evgenii Evtushenko (b. 1933), in order to comment on current affairs. The mix of the hilarious and the tragic, of rich literary language and criminal slang, articulated despair at the situation in Russia through black humour. 'Citizen Poet' mobilized the unassailable old guard of literary classics to stand in as its line of defence from the threat of post-Soviet censorship. The show's allusions to the present under the guise of a return to the past were a self-conscious parody of the 'Aesopian language' favoured by the artistic intelligentsia in the Soviet period. 'Citizen Poet' came to a much-publicized end on 5 March 2012—as the producers pointed out, the same day and month of Stalin's death in 1953.

Using the past to speak of the present was also the preferred method of passing off criticism in twentieth-century China, where this perilous device had even deeper roots in the literary culture. The question whether an obligation exists for the artistic intelligentsia to act as political and social critics has been raised by both observers and participants of the contemporary cultural scene in China. Cuts in state subsidies for cultural enterprises in the mid-1980s left the persons associated with them at the mercy of the public taste and, as in Russia, their forced and sudden professionalization proved painful. The subsequent complicity of Chinese artists, writers, and film-makers with a capitalist economy, trading freedom of expression for material benefits, also allows a comparison with the situation in post-communist Russia. After the suppression of the student rising on Tiananmen Square in June 1989, the 'intellectuals' who had been active in the movement for democracy in China during the 1980s were largely co-opted by government propaganda, which, in China as in Russia, has drawn on nationalism and anti-foreignism more than on any other form of state ideology. The ingredient of party policy that has brought it most dividends among the intelligentsia, however, has been its new-found identification as the guardian and keeper of the Chinese tradition. Nostalgia for the imperial age and cultivation of Confucian values, formerly the private refuge of the old intelligentsia under Mao, are now officially promoted and thus deprived of their political edge as an expression of dissidence. In the later 1980s writers celebrated their liberation from the shackles of socialist realism by displaying a penchant for graphic descriptions of sex and violence, the outcome being that much of Chinese literary production tended towards the surreal and the macabre. More recently, writers have pulled back from the 'avant-garde' tactics that left their readers baffled to more conventional narratives that also promise better sales. While political commentary is not absent from the latest blockbusters, many of which are preoccupied with modern Chinese history, authors must exercise self-censorship or accept that only expunged versions of their writings will appear in mainland China.

Since 1989 a significant number of intelligentsia figures critical of the political realities in China have opted for emigration; some, like the writer Ma Jian (b. 1953; based in Hong Kong after 1987 and in London from the handover of the island to the PRC in 1997), have used both literary fiction and the opinion pages of European and American newspapers

to voice their opposition to the regime in Beijing. Within China itself, resistance to the regime has come less from the intelligentsia than from uncoordinated forces on the periphery of Chinese society: adherents of new religious movements, persecuted as heterodox sects; 'national minorities', contesting Beijing's rule in Tibet or Xinjiang and receiving no sympathy from educated Han Chinese; or villagers staging riots against corrupt local officials. International attention has focused less on such forms of mass protest, and more on prominent individual cases, such as that of the literature professor Liu Xiaobo (b. 1955), repeatedly arrested for his role in the Tiananmen demonstrations, who was sentenced to eleven years in prison for alleged 'incitement to subvert state power' in 2009 and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in absentia in 2010, and of the conceptual artist Ai Weiwei (b. 1957), another outspoken critic of the PRC government, who too was held under arrest for charges of 'tax evasion' during 2011. The question whether their discursive strategies have hewn to or departed from the *zhishi fenzi* model may be answered affirmatively with regard to Liu, whose writings post-1989 are steeped in Enlightenment rhetoric and exude belief in the educational mission and civic responsibility of 'the enlightened intellectual', a potential leader or martyr of the revolutionary cause. Ai's iconoclastic postures, however, are closer to patterns of defiance as acted out by rogue artists in the United States than they are to the moral and ideological pretensions of the Russian intelligentsia, from whom twentieth-century Chinese *zhishi fenzi* took their cue.

Other, larger questions are more difficult to answer and may need a longer historical perspective. Has the intelligentsia model, as nurtured by ideas and social conditions of the late tsarist era and reshaped into a problematic symbiosis with the establishment during the postwar Soviet period, disappeared definitively in today's Russia, surviving only among the older generation? If so, what patterns of self-identification have replaced that of the *intelligent* among young people and what is the situation elsewhere in the former communist world? Has the model been able to last longer in the People's Republic of China, owing to the persistence of a communist regime bent on exploiting art and culture as props for its political legitimacy while monitoring their contents? Or have exposure to market forces, growing popular distaste with ideology, and the declining appeal of non-profitable occupational choices created new alternatives to the role of the Chinese 'intellectual'? We may conclude by suggesting that a transition process is under way; it is harder to guess in what direction it might lead.

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CHAPTER 33

POPULAR CULTURE

DEAN VULETIC

They were the 'Golden Kids' from red Czechoslovakia. Marta Kubišová, Václav Neckář, and Helena Vondráčková formed the pop group in 1968 just months after a Soviet-led military invasion quashed the Prague Spring, the movement that sought to liberalize the communist system in Czechoslovakia and make it more independent from the Soviet Union. Kubišová became an icon of the Prague Spring after she recorded the ballad 'Modlitba pro Martu' ('A Prayer for Marta') just days after the invasion. The song called for 'peace to remain in this land' and promised that 'the lost reign over your affairs will return to you, people, it will return'. The reformist leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC) under Alexander Dubček was replaced by that of Gustáv Husák in 1969, and the period of 'normalization' ensued which reversed the reforms of the Prague Spring and enacted retribution on its supporters. This included Kubišová, who from 1970 was forbidden by the authorities from performing in public. The Golden Kids consequently disbanded, although its other members were not openly critical of the communist government and continued their careers.[1] Indeed Vondráčková went on to become Czechoslovakia's biggest female pop star, and in 1977 she became top of the Bloc when she won the Intervision Song Contest, the Eastern European version of the Eurovision Song Contest.

At the same time that Kubišová was silenced, the pop singer Vice Vukov emerged as the bard of the Croatian Spring. That movement began in 1967 and sought greater autonomy for Croatia within Yugoslavia, with its supporters maintaining that the republic was culturally and economically disadvantaged in the Yugoslav federation. Vukov had emerged as one of Yugoslavia's most popular singers in the 1960s and represented it twice at the Eurovision Song Contests of 1963 and 1965. During the Croatian Spring he espoused a Croatian patriotism that irritated certain leaders of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY, as the Communist Party of Yugoslavia had been renamed in 1952), who considered assertions of national identity a threat to the multinational federation. Vukov's ballad 'Tvoja zemlja' ('Your Country') became an anthem of the movement: it alluded to the high rates of emigration from Croatia and called on its people to 'build your home here' for 'she is still here as long as we are here'. In 1971

the Croatian Spring was quashed by the LCY, when the reformist leadership of the party's republican wing, the League of Communists of Croatia (LCC), was replaced with a more conservative one. Vukov and other prominent figures from the movement were subsequently branded 'counterrevolutionary' by the LCY, but Vukov himself managed to avoid arrest as he was on tour in Australia. Afterwards he settled in Paris, returning to Yugoslavia in 1976. Like Kubišová, however, he was forbidden by the authorities from performing in public.[2]

The tales of Kubišová and Vukov exemplify the story of communism and popular culture, a relationship defined by censorship, appropriation, and resistance. Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx could not have predicted the power of pop music, commercial films, television serials, denim jeans, and other symbols of popular culture in the late twentieth century. Changing fashions and technological innovations, as well as an ever-widening generation gap between party leaderships and youth populations, left ruling communist parties in Eastern Europe unprepared as to how to respond to them. They were generally afraid of the political effect that Western—especially American—popular culture could have on citizens, not only because it promoted liberal values but also because its commercialism was anathema to their ideology. As often as not, however, the response of the parties to developments unforeseen in Marxist ideology was pragmatic. Realizing that popular culture could not be controlled through censorship alone, most parties in Eastern Europe sought from the late 1950s to catch up with the West and try to satisfy their citizens' desires for consumption and entertainment. They began to invest resources in producing local cultural products that reflected official modernization policies and that were broadly acceptable from a political standpoint. Yet even as they appropriated popular culture to advance their political interests, they were challenged by domestic stars like Kubišová and Vukov who had grown up under communist rule and were the beneficiaries of its cultural policies, but whose popularity gave them a potential to mobilize citizens against the government. The reluctance of communist regimes to allow as much freedom of consumption and individual expression as existed in the West, together with the inability of their economic systems to produce local cultural goods that could keep up with Western cultural trends and technological changes, proved ultimately to be one reason for the demise of the communist systems in Eastern Europe.

In Eastern Europe there was neither uniformity across the communist states in their conception of cultural policies nor synchronicity in the development of their popular cultures. While the cases of Kubišová and Vukov demonstrate how communist regimes censored popular culture when it expressed political criticism, a comparison of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia shows that there was nevertheless diversity in official policies towards popular culture. After it severed its alliance with the Soviet Union in 1948 and developed a non-aligned foreign policy, Yugoslavia was unusually open to cultural influences from the West. Much to the envy of many Czechoslovaks, Western popular culture was more accessible in Yugoslavia than in their own country, since with the exception of the Prague Spring, the CPC maintained a pro-Soviet cultural policy that restricted Western cultural influences. Before the Second World

War, the cultural hierarchy between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia had been markedly different. From the Austro-Hungarian era, Prague had served as an important centre of education for artists from the lands that comprised Yugoslavia. Czech artists had played a major role in developing the cultural infrastructure in these areas: in Dalmatia, for example, whence Vukov hailed, Czechs had been prominent in establishing music schools and orchestras.[3] A focus on smaller states such as Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia thus allows us to explore variation in the relationship between communism and popular culture, variation that both pre-dated and succeeded the communist era. It also suggests that this relationship cannot be grasped only through the bipolar lens of the Cold War, which sees popular culture as simply a stake in the conflict between the superpowers.

Censorship

Prior to the Cold War, states such as Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were considered part of the 'West', insofar as they belonged to its Central European and Mediterranean cultural spheres. The Czech writer Milan Kundera, one of the most successful Eastern European authors in the West, argued in his 1984 essay 'The Tragedy of Central Europe', that communism 'kidnapped' Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland from the West.[4] Both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia could claim strong cultural connections with the German-speaking world—including a shared affinity for the *schlager* genre of popular music—while Yugoslavia's Adriatic region had connections with Italy. Moreover, in the interwar period both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were exposed to cultural influences from the United States, especially through jazz and film, although these were censored under Nazi occupation. The proscription of jazz in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia is described by the Czech writer Josef Škvorecký in his *The Bass Saxophone*,[5] and elsewhere he underlines similarities with its suppression under communism. Ironically, the attitude of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) towards American popular culture varied during the interwar years. Until 1936 the CPSU was rather tolerant of jazz; it then suppressed it between 1936 and 1941; but allowed the genre to thrive during the Second World War as an expression of the alliance with the USA.[6] As this suggests, the attitude of communist parties towards popular culture was always shaped in part by what their allies and opponents produced and consumed, and this did not always make for consistent policies.

Communist parties took control over Eastern European states in the three years after the end of the Second World War—in Yugoslavia in 1945 and in Czechoslovakia in 1948. As they did so, Moscow ensured that Western cultural influences were censored, that Soviet—and especially Russian—cultural products were promoted, and that the policy of socialist realism, articulated by Andrei Zhdanov, the chief cultural commissar in the Soviet Union, was endorsed.[7] Yugoslavia was naturally affected by these policies, since it was allied with the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1948, but its early dissatisfaction

with Soviet cultural domination was a harbinger of greater tensions to come. Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito complained that the Soviets tried to push too much Russian music onto Yugoslav radio stations and charged too much for their films,[8] while Vice President Milovan Djilas noted that the Soviets expressed little interest in Yugoslavia's cultural products and was shocked when Zhdanov asked him whether opera existed in Yugoslavia.[9] This already reflected the trend in which national interests and sentiments would trump communist fraternalism when it came to cultural matters. Nevertheless because Yugoslavia had a less developed cultural infrastructure than other parts of Eastern Europe, its cultural policy between 1945 and 1948 privileged relations with these states, and experts from them—including from Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union—were welcomed to assist in the development of Yugoslav cultural institutions.

That the censorship of popular culture under communism was contingent upon developments in international relations was reflected in Eastern European communist parties halting cultural exchange with Yugoslavia after it was expelled from the Cominform in 1948. From 1950 the Communist Party of Yugoslavia responded by reducing censorship of Western popular culture imports as it sought to increase economic, military, and political support from the West in the face of a blockade from Eastern Europe.[10] The other communist states, seeing how Yugoslav cultural institutions and media outlets featured Western popular culture, reacted by portraying the government as a stooge of the West. Yugoslavia's cultural reorientation to the West was underlined in 1950 when it joined the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), an organization designed to promote cooperation among Western European national broadcasters in radio and later television. In 1956 the EBU began organizing the Eurovision Song Contest, in which Yugoslavia was the only communist participant throughout the Cold War. By contrast, Yugoslavia shunned the International Radio Organization, which was the equivalent grouping to the EBU among the Eastern European states. Not surprisingly, its more liberal policies attracted some Eastern European cultural figures who bridled against the more restrictive cultural systems in their own states. The Czech film director František Čáp, for example, emigrated to Yugoslavia from Czechoslovakia for this reason; he ended up residing in Slovenia and went on to produce some major works in its cinematography, including the romantic comedies *Vesna* (*Spring*) in 1953 and *Ne čakaj na maj* (*Don't Wait for May*) in 1957.[11]

The year in which *Vesna* was released coincided with the death (in March) of Joseph Stalin. With the rise to power of his successor Nikita Khrushchev, relations between Eastern European states and Yugoslavia improved. With the onset of the Thaw, the Soviet Union and certain East European states themselves began to pursue less restrictive cultural policies and more cultural exchange with the West. After its failed revolution of 1956, Hungary became more open to Western cultural influences under the leadership of János Kádár, as did Poland under Władysław Gomułka, who enacted liberalizing reforms from the same year. Poland soon became an important centre for popular music festivals in Eastern Europe, its seaside resort town of Sopot hosting a jazz festival from 1956 and the Sopot International Song Festival from 1961, which transformed into

Intervision from 1977 to 1980.[12] By contrast, the German Democratic Republic became more restrictive towards Western cultural influences in the early 1960s, following on the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, which prevented East Berliners from travelling to West Berlin to buy Western cultural products. Nevertheless West German radio and television broadcasts continued to penetrate East Germany throughout the Cold War. Most hostile to the penetration of Western cultural influences was Albania, which severed its alliance with the Soviet Union in 1961, criticizing its policies on peaceful coexistence, de-Stalinization, and rapprochement with Yugoslavia, and turned to China. Despite its cultural isolation, however, Albania was not entirely impermeable to the Albanian-language popular culture that was produced in the Albanian-speaking areas of Yugoslavia: indeed it was there that the first Albanian-language rock bands were established in the late 1960s.[13]

As for Czechoslovakia, its Communist Party was slower to de-Stalinize than those of Hungary and Poland, and it maintained greater censorship of popular culture until the Prague Spring. Indeed, it was not until 1962 that the CPC blew up the world's biggest statue of Stalin, constructed in 1955 on Letná Hill in Prague.[14] In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Czechoslovakia reduced its cultural exchange with Yugoslavia as relations with the LCY soured once more, after some Eastern European communist parties renewed their criticisms of it for being too open to Western influences and for adopting a new party programme. Yugoslavia at this time was deliberately pursuing a policy of cultural diplomacy in Eastern Europe designed to promote itself as more liberal and modern than other states in the region, and Western popular music featured prominently in its cultural exports. In this regard, Yugoslavia was acting similarly to the United States, whose State Department began to sponsor international tours of jazz performers, the first of which by Dizzy Gillespie in 1956 included Yugoslavia as the only Eastern European stop.[15] Between 1958 and 1961, by contrast, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union refused the visits of Yugoslav jazz performers due to the prevailing political tensions, even though they were becoming more tolerant of jazz domestically. The changing relations between Belgrade and Prague was embodied in the fate of a Czechoslovak-Yugoslav film co-production, the musical comedy *Hvězda jede na jih/Zvijezda putuje na jug* (*The Star Goes South*), which tells the story of a Czechoslovak jazz orchestra that travels to perform on the Dalmatian coast, only to have its tour constantly disrupted by the failure of the orchestra's singer to meet the group. Produced in 1958, it was not shown in Czechoslovakia until 1964, being considered by the CPC to be too friendly towards Yugoslavia.[16]

Appropriation

Yugoslavia's openness to Western cultural influences was not unproblematic, as there was no consensus within the LCY in the 1950s concerning the political and social effects of Western popular culture on the citizens of Yugoslavia. The party was aware that

Yugoslav cultural industries were not yet in a position to produce local products that could compete with Western cultural imports. The new party programme adopted in 1958 explicitly endorsed the need to develop local popular culture through film, radio, and television.[17] The party also considered a pan-Yugoslav popular culture to be crucial in forging cultural bonds among the multinational citizenry, as popular culture was seen as international and not connected to any of the folk traditions of the Yugoslav nations. Popular culture played a similar role in forging a common cultural identity in other multinational states of Eastern Europe, such as Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. At the same time, the LCY welcomed the modernity associated with popular culture since it buttressed its claim to be bringing economic and social progress to Yugoslavia. It thus embraced popular culture from the late 1950s as an important part of its cultural policy, despite occasional concerns about the influence of Western cultural fashions or Yugoslavia's marginalization on the Western cultural periphery—as evinced by debates over its poor results at Eurovision in the 1970s and its temporary withdrawal from the contest between 1977 and 1980.[18]

Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, de-Stalinization also facilitated the development of popular culture, as other communist parties realized the need to appeal to citizens' desires for consumption and entertainment. However, although Eastern European states were broadly successful in the 1950s and 1960s in promoting economic growth based on the development of heavy industry, they lagged behind the West when it came to the production of consumer goods. This became an issue of increasing concern to communist governments. In 1959 when Khrushchev visited the American National Exhibition in Moscow, he famously told American Vice President Richard Nixon that the Soviet Union would be at the same technological level as the United States in seven years.[19] In 1961 the East German leader Walter Ulbricht told Khrushchev in a letter that West German consumer prosperity was one of the reasons why two million East Germans had emigrated to that country in the preceding decade.[20] Even as the Eastern European states increased the production of consumer goods, then, there was gradual awareness that they lagged behind the West in terms of innovation, fashion, diversity, and availability, not least in their fashion industries.[21] This became especially apparent during the economic decline that the region suffered in the 1970s and 1980s. Even in Yugoslavia, which had the most developed consumer culture industries, the superior attractiveness of Western consumer goods was underlined by the shopping trips that Yugoslavs made to Western locations such as Trieste and Graz. By contrast, their Eastern European neighbours saw a trip to Yugoslavia as a way to access desired Western goods or Yugoslav versions of them.[22]

Although Eastern European states produced cultural products that imitated those in the West, these products had little impact on the West. While this could partly be attributed to linguistic differences, it was also due to the fact that Eastern European products were perceived in the West as poor imitations of Western products, and also to a prejudice that had its roots in a longer tradition of viewing the East as more backward and folkloric.[23] There was, moreover, political suspicion of cultural products seen to be used by communist governments. It was the work of dissidents that proved

attractive in the West, such as the novels of Kundera and Škvorecký, or the films of the Czechoslovak New Wave in the 1960s. For example, the film *Obchod na korze* (*A Shop on the High Street*), set in Slovakia during the Second World War, was the first film from Eastern Europe—as well as the first about the Holocaust—to win the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1965. *Ostře sledované vlaky* (*Closely Watched Trains*) won the same award in 1967, with Neckář from the Golden Kids in the lead role as a young man trying to lose his virginity while working in a train station during the Nazi occupation.[24]

Some pop singers capitalized on their country's traditional ties with Western centres and established careers abroad. The Czech pop singer Karel Gott was a star throughout the German-speaking territories as well as in Eastern Europe. He even represented Austria at the Eurovision Song Contest in 1968 with the song 'Tausend Fenster' ('A Thousand Windows'), which lamented the loneliness of modern, urban life while expressing hope that one could still find love in it. His appearance in a contest that was otherwise shunned by the Eastern Europeans symbolized the Prague Spring that was then underway. During normalization, the Czechoslovak government sought to appropriate Gott's popularity at home and abroad. Gott did not always serenade the regime: indeed in 1971 he considered defecting to West Germany. And in 1977 he recorded the song 'Kam tenkrát šel můj bratr Jan' ('Where Did My Brother Jan Go Then)', a cover version of Eric Carmen's 'All by Myself', in honour of Jan Palach, the student who immolated himself in 1969 in protest against the communist government. Nevertheless, Gott participated in the anti-Charter movement that opposed Charter 77, and became the first pop singer to be awarded the highest Czechoslovak honour of 'National Artist' in 1985.[25] The example of Gott demonstrates that the relationship between individual artists and the communist regimes was not straightforward: it could involve an element of negotiation with the artist on the part of the government, and a degree of pragmatic compromise on the part of the artist often depending on the artist's popularity.

The career of Yugoslavia's Ivo Robić was similar to Gott's. From the late 1950s he too built a prominent career in the German-speaking lands. His international career took off in Czechoslovakia in 1956, when he was contracted by its biggest record company Supraphon to record cover versions of hits by Western songwriters and singers such as George Gershwin, Domenico Modugno, Elvis Presley, and Paul Anka. Robić had begun his career during the Second World War, singing on radio in the Independent State of Croatia, a Nazi puppet state. Because of this, he was not allowed to perform publicly immediately after the war, but the communist authorities, aware that they needed to develop a local popular culture, soon rehabilitated him. Robić went on to become one of Yugoslavia's most successful pop singers. His biggest hit in West Germany was his 1959 song 'Morgen' ('Tomorrow'), with its theme of hoping for a better future: 'today we are also poor and small', 'without sunshine', and 'alone'; 'but tomorrow . . . .'[26] This caused concern among radio producers in Yugoslavia, who wondered whether the song was actually a criticism of the communist system, especially as it came at a time when diplomatic relations between West Germany and Yugoslavia

had been severed after the latter had recognized East Germany in 1957. However, probably because of his widespread domestic and international appeal, Robić was never censored.[27]

Robić was attractive to West German audiences in part because he hailed from a Mediterranean country that West Germans were increasingly discovering as tourists. Tourism served to expose Yugoslavia further to Western cultural influences, especially along the Adriatic coast. For their part, Yugoslavs were more able to pursue foreign travel than other Eastern Europeans, since the state's non-aligned policy meant that its passport holders could travel relatively freely throughout the East and West. Returning emigrants were another medium that transmitted Western cultural influences to Yugoslavia, since Yugoslavs emigrated abroad for work in large numbers, particularly to West Germany, sending back remittances and helping reduce domestic unemployment.[28] Czechoslovaks, like other Eastern Europeans, faced far greater restrictions on travel abroad, especially after 1968. This was portrayed in the Czech film *Pupendo*, in which a family tries to go on holiday on the Adriatic coast in Yugoslavia in the 1980s. After they help an artist blacklisted by the authorities, their names are broadcast on the Voice of America and they end up being allowed to go only as far as Lake Balaton in Hungary.[29]

The phenomenon of the second home was one shared in both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in the 1970s and 1980s, although again it demonstrated different degrees of openness to the West. Many Yugoslavs built holiday cottages, or *vikendice*, often on the Adriatic coast where they could rent them to Western tourists.[30] For Czechs the second home was embodied in the country cottage, or *chata*, which grew in popularity during normalization and was seen by some as a private, depoliticized space where one could escape the more repressive aspects of public life. Arguably, it was another consumer good that the communist regime manipulated in order to 'buy' the political passivity of its citizens.[31]

Resistance

Resistance to the communist regimes in Eastern Europe could entail everything from tuning into forbidden Western radio or television stations, smuggling in Western consumer goods, or producing or consuming artistic works that were overtly or implicitly critical of the system. Following the quashing of the Prague Spring, some artists went into exile in order to continue their resistance. Škvorecký, for example, left Czechoslovakia in 1968 and settled in Canada, where he established the publishing house 68 Books. This published *samizdat* works banned in Czechoslovakia, including ones by Václav Havel, Kundera, and Škvorecký himself, which were then smuggled back into Czechoslovakia or translated for foreign audiences. In countries with a more open system, what the communist regime considered resistance was not always clear. The Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulić argues that as a journalist in Yugoslavia the limits on freedom of expression were less defined than in other parts of Eastern Europe, but

contends that self-censorship was omnipresent.[32] Those like Kubišová and Vukov who chose to make public criticism of the regimes could find their careers halted, face difficulties in finding employment, come under surveillance from the secret police, or be forbidden to travel abroad. In the case of these two, censorship did not occur immediately; it was imposed later following changes in the political situation. Most artists, of course, shunned criticism of the regime and stuck to innocuous subjects, as did Vondráčková in her pop songs. Ironically, Kubišová's folk patriotism cost more than Vondráčková's pop internationalism, underlining the fact that the communist regimes, after the 1950s, did not tend to oppose Western popular culture simply because it was Western.

After the Croatian and Prague Springs, communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe faced the challenge of a new genre, that of rock: again, its treatment differed between states. In Czechoslovakia rock music became a key medium of resistance against the communist regime, as was demonstrated by the band The Plastic People of the Universe, who, like Golden Kids, were formed in 1968 just after the quashing of the Prague Spring. While Golden Kids played covers of innocuous Western pop songs, however, The Plastic People, taking their inspiration from bands like the Velvet Underground, the Fugs, and Frank Zappa, annoyed the authorities with their psychedelic rock music and non-conformist behaviour. 'The Plastic People' name was taken from a song by Zappa and the Mothers of Invention. As an underground band they were targeted by the police, who in 1974 broke up a concert and arrested and beat audience members in the infamous 'České Budějovice massacre'. In 1976 members of The Plastic People and other musicians were put on trial and convicted of 'disturbing the peace'. This prompted a group of dissidents in Czechoslovakia to release Charter 77, a document that called on the communist government to respect human rights, including the freedoms of expression and assembly, in accordance with the state's constitution and international agreements, such as the Helsinki Accords of 1975. One of the leaders of Charter 77 was Havel, the playwright whose works had been banned after the Prague Spring and who was later imprisoned for his dissident activity.[33] Another participant was Kubišová, whose support for Charter 77 confirmed her as the leading anti-establishment pop star and further contrasted her with Vondráčková, who joined Gott in the anti-Charter movement. During the Velvet Revolution of 1989, Kubišová performed publicly for the first time since 1970 when she sang 'Modlitba pro Martu' before demonstrators in Prague's Wenceslas Square. And soon after becoming president, Havel invited the Rolling Stones to perform in Prague in 1990 and made Zappa one of his special advisers.[34]

Rock music in Yugoslavia in the 1970s did not function as a genre of resistance in the same way as in Czechoslovakia. The Yugoslav communist regime maintained a more tolerant attitude towards the genre (one of Yugoslavia's first rock clubs was even opened in Rijeka just after the Prague Spring and named after Palach). Such tolerance was intended to make the LCY appealing to young people, especially after student movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s had shown they could challenge the communist regime. In exchange, Yugoslav rock performers were expected to avoid political criticism of the

regime. More than that, they were encouraged to include in their repertoires songs that glorified Yugoslavism, Tito, and the Partisan movement. Such panegyric rock songs were unique in Eastern Europe.[35] One of the most famous was 'Računajte na nas' ('Count on Us') released by the band Rani mraz (Early Frost) in 1978, which assured that 'some suspect that we are being carried by the wrong current, because we listen to records and play rock, but somewhere within us is the flame of battles': 'You can count on us.'[36]

After the death of Tito in May 1980, Yugoslav rock performers could no longer be counted on to toe the party line. Yugoslav politics, culture, and society became increasingly liberalized and public criticism of the communist system became more open. A new generation of rock bands emerged that followed New Wave and punk trends. They openly criticized the communist system and articulated popular dissatisfaction with economic and political conditions, especially as the economic crisis of the 1980s led to a decline in the standard of living with high inflation and shortages of consumer goods. These politically and socially critical rock bands were especially visible in Slovenia, where the republican leadership initiated a period of liberalism in the early 1980s unmatched elsewhere in Eastern Europe. One of the Slovenian bands, Laibach (the German name for Ljubljana), even achieved international acclaim in the 1980s as it cultivated an ironic Nazi-style image that was intended to highlight the totalitarian similarities between communism and fascism.[37]

By the late 1980s a more liberal leadership of the LCC loosened the communist regime's control over cultural matters in Croatia as well. In 1988 Prljavo kazalište (Dirty Theatre) released a song titled 'Mojoj majci' ('To My Mother'), dedicated to the recently deceased mother of the band's guitarist, Jasenko Houra. The song referred to Houra's mother Ruža as 'ruža hrvatska' ('the Croatian rose'), and it was the first time since the Croatian Spring that a hit song had explicitly mentioned the word 'Croatian'. It was also publicly perceived as an ode to the female leader of the LCC during the Croatian Spring, Savka Dabčević Kučar, who was replaced when the movement was quashed and subsequently removed from public life. Because of its patriotic connotations the song was criticized by conservative elements within the LCY for propagating Croatian nationalism, and the band consequently lost some of its popularity in Serbia where Slobodan Milošević had risen to power on the basis of a nationalist platform. In 1989, despite threats from the authorities to cancel their performance, Prljavo kazalište played a concert in Zagreb's central square that was attended by around a hundred thousand people.[38]

Nostalgia

One legacy of communism in Eastern Europe is that it established cultural connections and habits that still thrive and which have shaped the growth of commercial popular culture in the post-communist era. The successor states of Czechoslovakia

and Yugoslavia, for example, remain integrated cultural spheres, with cultural industries continuing to draw on a common market developed during the communist period (although the main languages of the former states—Czech and Croatian or Serbian—still dominate over smaller ones, such as Slovak and Slovenian). In many cases, celebrities who emerged during the communist era have successfully adapted to the free market. This has not been uncontroversial, however, and there has been debate as to whether this represents nostalgia for the communist period or even glorification of the communist system itself. Public debate has also challenged figures such as Gott and Vondráčková about their complicity in the communist regimes. That popular music can still express something of the political charge accumulated in the communist era was demonstrated when Vondráčková sued Kubišová for allegedly pulling out of a tour of the revived Golden Kids. Old political divisions re-emerged as Havel and other public figures signed an open letter calling for Vondráčková to drop the case, which she ultimately lost in 2010.[39] However, while Kubišová has been glorified as a dissident since the fall of communism, it is Vondráčková who remains the biggest female pop star in the Czech Republic. As for Vukov, like other Croatian pop stars, he was co-opted by the independence movement in Croatia in the early 1990s and performed patriotic songs during the war. Increasingly critical of the nationalism of the Croatian Democratic Union government in the 1990s, however, he became an independent member of the Croatian parliament in 2003, affiliated to the Social Democratic Party, the successor of the LCC. Vukov died tragically in 2008 after spending three years in a coma caused by a fall down the steps of the parliament.[40]

Eastern European societies have become more integrated into the sphere of Western popular culture since the fall of communism. All have entered the Eurovision Song Contest, and since 2000 it has been won by four successor states of the Soviet Union as well as by Serbia. The victory of the latter in 2007, when Marija Šerifović sang 'Molitva' ('A Prayer'), symbolized Serbia's cultural reintegration into Europe following the ending of the international sanctions that had been imposed under the Milošević regime. Czech films have continued to enjoy international success. In 1994 the film *Kolya*, which highlighted the censorship of artists during the communist era along with the dynamics of Czech-Russian relations, won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.[41]

Many East European countries now exploit their communist heritage as a commercial resource, especially in cities that have seen a boom in international tourism since 1989. For example, a Museum of Communism has been set up in the centre of Prague, right next to a McDonald's restaurant; similar museums exist in Berlin—the DDR Museum—and in Budapest—the Terror House. In one of the more exemplary cases of how spaces associated with communist regimes have been reclaimed by post-communist popular culture, the area of Blloku in Tirana—formerly off limits to the public as it housed Albania's Communist Party leaders—has been turned into an entertainment area full of cafes and bars. The pyramid-like mausoleum of Albania's communist-era leader Enver Hoxha, meanwhile, has been used as a disco, although only after his body was moved elsewhere. In Prague the base of the Stalin monument

on Letná Hill hosted a pirate radio station and rock club after 1989, and since 1991 it has been the site of a metronome sculpture. In 1996 a statue of Michael Jackson briefly occupied the place where Stalin had once stood to promote the former's HIStory world tour—perhaps the ultimate victory of Western popular culture over Czechoslovak communism.[42]

Notes

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CHAPTER 34

RELIGION UNDER COMMUNISM

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The founders of the world communist movement were all atheists, but so too were most modernizing intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Heirs of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, these ideological modernizers derived their atheism from various traditions such as Comte's positivism and Nietzsche's nihilism. What was distinctive about Marx's atheism was its connection to class struggle. Marx's famous statement, 'Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people',[1] refers to the function of religion for easing the pain of the oppressed classes while dulling their consciousness of their true class interests. The main task of revolutionaries in the Marxist tradition is not directly to do away with religion—as for example the positivists might have attempted through scientific education—but to end the class oppression that makes people feel the need for religion. As Mao Zedong put it, 'It is the peasants who made the idols with their own hands, and when the time comes they will cast aside the idols with their own hands; there is no need for anyone else to do it for them prematurely.'[2]

The contribution of the Bolshevik revolution was to develop the organizational apparatus for a social transformation that would, it was assumed, eventually render religion irrelevant. In the struggle to consummate the revolution and to build a strong socialist state, however, the Bolsheviks would have to neutralize the power of what they perceived to be a major counter-revolutionary force—the Russian Orthodox Church. In the struggle to neutralize this church, Lenin began and Stalin completed the organizational structures and the repertoire of strategies and tactics that would be used as a model by almost all subsequent communist movements. The model often, however, did not fit the religious circumstances of other communist countries. And although it initially seemed successful in eliminating political opposition from religion in the Soviet Union, the model in the long run was a failure on its own terms.

Because of the importance of the Soviet model in most other communist countries, we will first describe how that model came to be developed. Then we will show the

consequences of its clumsy fit with other communist countries that tried to adopt it. Finally, we will discuss the causes and consequences of that model's collapse through the communist world.

The Stalinist Model for Suppressing Religious Institutions

For a millennium the Russian Orthodox Church had been the moral foundation of the Russian national culture. Originally it had been governed by an independently chosen hierarchical patriarchate, but after Peter the Great abolished the patriarchate in 1721, it had become a part of the Russian state's administrative machinery, governed by a Holy Synod chaired by a representative of the tsar. It was established by law as a state church and until 1905 defection from the church was a punishable offence. The liturgy of the church was deeply embedded in the way of life of Russia's peasants and was indispensable for their sense of meaning and community.[3]

After the fall of the tsar in February 1917, the Orthodox Church convened a National Council that re-established its patriarchate and declared its independence from the Provisional Government. After the Bolsheviks came to power in the October Revolution, they established a constitution that guaranteed freedom of religious belief. But the Communist Party needed to weaken the Orthodox Church to carry out its agendas. Although no longer a state church, the Orthodox Church was still a powerful support for the forms of social life that had prevailed under the old regime. In 1918, the government issued a Decree on Separation of Church from State which took away the right of the church to own property and eliminated all of its educational and welfare facilities. The new patriarch Tikhon denounced this and condemned the communists. Later, when it became clear that the Bolsheviks were going to remain in power, he modified his position, but the communists continued to see the church as a dangerous opponent. A first showdown came in 1922 when the government used the excuse of raising funds for post-civil-war famine relief to expropriate valuables, such as gold crosses and chalices, belonging to the church. Led by Patriarch Tikhon, the church resisted this—if not necessarily the seizure of all church valuables, at least the seizure of consecrated items. Lenin saw this as a major opportunity to discredit and crush the church: 'When in the territories afflicted by famine people are eaten for food and hundreds if not thousands of corpses are lying in the roads, we can (and therefore we must) carry out the seizure of church valuables with wildest and most merciless energy and not stop short of suppressing any opposition.'[4]

Patriarch Tikhon was arrested for resisting the confiscation of valuables. Many clergy and bishops were put on trial and imprisoned or executed. Other minority religions, such as Baptists and Pentecostals, were spared this onslaught in order to get their support for the attack on the dominant Orthodox Church. During the trials of church

leaders, activist lower clergy were recruited to testify against the church leadership. The government cultivated such pro-communist clergy and laity to form a 'Living Church', which supported the communist state against the main body of the Orthodox hierarchy. Patriarch Tikhon was eventually released in 1923, after he signed a confession and promised never again to interfere in politics. Having used the Living Church to weaken the main leadership of the Orthodox Church, the government then began to abandon their erstwhile ally. It was better to have a weakened and compliant Orthodox Church that still had the allegiance of most Russian believers than to have the support of a small, insurgent Living Church that did not command much mass support.

After Tikhon died in 1925, the Soviet government arrested his three nominated successors. Finally, in 1927, an acceptable candidate was found, Metropolitan Sergii, who had been for a time in the Living Church, but had since returned to Orthodoxy. Sergii issued a Declaration of Loyalty to the Soviet Union, 'whose joys and successes are our successes, and whose setbacks are our setbacks'.[5] Subsequent patriarchs would echo his position. With the Orthodox Church hierarchy now sufficiently under its control, the Soviet government could then attack all the minority religious bodies whose support they had encouraged earlier.

By now Stalin was in power, and the finished model for controlling religion was his regime's handiwork. This model would be eventually exported to all other communist countries that allied themselves with the Soviet Union. It had six main elements. First, proclaim freedom of religious belief in one's constitution (this served to increase incentives to abandon the mainstream church to seek other faiths). Second, take away most of the property of the churches, strip them of their educational and welfare activities, and restrict them to purely liturgical functions. Third, imprison and even execute the major leaders of the dominant church, not officially on religious grounds, but on grounds that they are attacking the revolution. Fourth, create bodies of pro-regime clergy and laity to help carry out attacks on the church leadership, and encourage leaders of minority religions to join in the attacks as well. Fifth, after having destroyed the leadership of the dominant church, appoint compliant successors. The dominant church will now be a subservient, hollowed-out shell. Finally, attack (perhaps now with the aid of the subservient leaders of the dominant church), those minority religions that initially helped join in the attacks on the dominant church.

This model for controlling religious institutions could be used to support a range of policies towards religious belief and practices, from pragmatic efforts to weaken and control religious institutions to ideologically zealous attempts (supported by many communists and inspired not just by classical Marxism but by many other strands of modernist atheism) to wipe out religion entirely. Beginning in 1929, Stalin tried to use this framework of control to eliminate religion entirely—to create a 'new socialist man' who would be an atheist man. This policy to promote atheism was connected with the forced collectivization of the peasantry and the rapid industrialization of society. Religious practices were deeply interwoven with the way of life of the peasantry, and the destruction of religion would facilitate the destruction of that whole way of life. The constitution was amended to include not only freedom of religious belief but also the freedom to

propagate atheism. Institutes for the propagation of atheism were established. The coercive apparatus was tightened to make any practice of religion extremely difficult. Many thousands of clergy and laity were arrested and church buildings were destroyed or converted to other uses. 'By 1939 the Orthodox church had virtually ceased to exist as an institution. . . . it is probable that no more than one or two hundred churches remained open out of a prerevolutionary total of some 46,000; clergy and laymen were in labor camps; and only four bishops remained at liberty.'[6]

Stalin's policy towards religion changed sharply, however, after 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The policy of the 1930s was predicated on the idea that traditional national consciousness could be eradicated in order to create a society based on the universal principles of socialism. Now under attack from Germany, Stalin had to call upon the deepest reservoirs of national culture to motivate heroic defence of the Fatherland. For their part, as the Nazis marched through the Ukraine, they actually opened churches to gain the goodwill of the population. Stalin thereupon began to open his churches as well. In 1943 Metropolitan Sergii was summoned to the Kremlin and made patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. The government for its part set up a Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church. (Later on, this would be turned into a more comprehensive Council for Religious Affairs.) Besides churches, theological schools and monasteries were reopened and the number of clergy and bishops increased. After the war, this relatively relaxed policy towards religious practice continued until Stalin's death in 1953.

The same framework that had been put in place by 1927 remained in effect. But now, instead of being used to crush religious practice, it was being used to sustain sufficient religious practice to support nationalistic solidarity. The Orthodox Church, though, remained a hollowed-out shell. Successors to Patriarch Sergii, who died in 1944, were just as compliant. The church was restricted to strictly liturgical services—there was no room for independent educational or social welfare activities. Other useful functions were being assigned to the church, however. It was enlisted to help gain control of Orthodox populations in the Ukraine and in the Soviet satellites of Eastern Europe. For example, many Ukrainian Orthodox had been 'Uniates', having reunited with the Church of Rome in the sixteenth century. Given the hostility of the Vatican to communism, it was in the interest of the Soviet Union to 'liquidate' this Uniate church and reunite it with a Moscow-controlled Russian Orthodoxy. Also, the Orthodox Church of the Ukraine had been 'autocephalous', a national church independent of the Russian patriarchate. The Russian Orthodox Church was all too willing to eliminate this independence by bringing all Ukrainians under the Russian patriarchate. The Orthodox Church also became useful as an instrument of international diplomacy, sending reliable delegates to international peace conferences, and eventually to the World Council of Churches, all the while presenting a favourable image of the Soviet Union's respect for religious freedom on the world stage.

For reasons that are not fully clear, Khrushchev reversed the elder Stalin's relatively tolerant policies towards religion and launched a strong anti-religious campaign from 1959 until Khrushchev's overthrow in 1964. 'In the course of the antireligious

campaign . . . two thirds of the 20,000 Orthodox churches then legally operating were closed, and many were pulled down. Priests and believers were arrested and put on trial.'[7] These anti-religious policies created such a negative reaction that Brezhnev relaxed them and returned religious policy to something like the later Stalin years.

Exporting the Stalinist Model

The Stalinist model for controlling and stifling religious practice was taken up by all of the new communist states after the Second World War, except Tito's Yugoslavia. Adopting, at least outwardly, the Stalinist practical formula, rather than the subtleties of Marxist ideology, seems to have been the real admission price to the communist club. However, the Stalinist practices developed to deal with the religious question in a Russian society dominated by the Orthodox Church did not fit well with the actual circumstances of most of these new communist states. Consider China.

Imperial China never had a national, hierarchically organized established church. The term 'religion' (with its Protestant-derived connotation of a personal faith practised within congregations) only entered the Chinese vocabulary in the late nineteenth century, a rendering of the German term for religion, transmitted through Japan. In contrast to this 'modern' religion, most of the ritual practices of ordinary Chinese people were defined as 'superstition' (another new term in the Chinese vocabulary, originally introduced by Jesuits in the seventeenth century). These local practices, deeply embedded in the fabric of rural life, drew upon Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions. In the early twentieth century, Chinese reformers tried to purify and modernize these traditions by organizing them into hierarchically structured congregations subordinate to the state—remaking them in the image of Western churches. But they tried to destroy the 'superstitious' syncretistic ancestor and local deity worship that brought a sense of meaning and community to the vast majority of the Chinese people.[8]

After the Chinese Communists took power in 1949, they carried out land reform. In the process, they confiscated the land that local temples had relied on to finance themselves, and they attacked the landlords and other local elites who would have been the informal leaders of the temple associations. After 1950, with collectivization and then the Great Leap Forward, life in rural communities was so regimented that there was little time for carrying out large community religious festivals. But worship of ancestors and local gods continued to be carried out within families. Most of the peasants did not destroy the idols with their own hands.[9]

The Communist Party made a distinction between 'religion' and 'superstition'. The government recognized five religions, Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism, all of which fit the Western model of organized churches with a hierarchical ordained clergy. Its policy towards religion was the Stalin policy. There was the full Stalinist apparatus—the state agency for regulating religious affairs, the various 'patriotic associations' of pro-regime clergy, the imprisonment of religious leaders, not

explicitly for religious beliefs (the freedom of which was officially protected in the constitution) but for counter-revolutionary activities, the stripping-away of educational and welfare functions of the religious organizations. But most of the five religions lacked the well-organized hierarchy the Orthodox Church had in Russia. The centralized organization of Han Chinese Buddhists and Daoists was artificial, having been developed only in the twentieth century. The Protestants were divided into many denominations. Only the Catholic Church fit the model of a centralized, hierarchical organization. Especially since its leader in the 1950s was the uncompromisingly anti-communist Pope Pius XII, the Catholic Church was a perfect target for the Stalinist apparatus for religious control, and the government turned the full force of that apparatus on the Catholics. Priests were imprisoned and executed, churches destroyed, and a small group of 'patriotic' bishops recruited to lead the Church, in defiance of the Vatican. Most Catholics quietly practised their faith in the privacy of their homes. The Catholic Church, though, lost any capability of being an opposition force in Chinese politics. Though a success for China's Stalinist religious policy, the overall effect of this suppression was modest. The Catholic Church, after all, only constituted about 1 per cent of the Chinese population.[10]

The state applied the same methods to the other four religions, but with less effectiveness. The organization of these faiths was always looser and more amorphous than the Catholics and it was harder to create top-down structures that could encompass all believers. And whatever centralized organization could be created, it did not really affect the 'superstitious' activities that constituted the majority of religious practice. Similar problems in fitting the Stalinist model onto the Asian religious landscape can be found in Vietnam and Laos.

Besides the majority Han Chinese population, the Chinese Stalinist religious policy had to handle the religious circumstances of the former empire's two major religious minorities—Tibetan Buddhists and Muslims. Tibet was a society dominated by a single religion organized somewhat hierarchically, with the Dalai Lama at its apex. Tibetan Buddhism fit the pattern that the Stalinist model had been designed to handle, and after 1959, the Chinese Communists pursued classic Stalinist policies towards Tibet. But by then the Dalai Lama had fled to India and Tibetans had come to see the Chinese Communist as an alien colonizing force. China's Muslims, especially those belonging to the Uyghur nationality in Xinjiang, also saw Chinese religious policy as part of a colonizing project.[11]

The Stalinist-style religious policy faced similar problems when communist governments attempted to implement it in many parts of Eastern Europe. Orthodox Christians in Romania,[12] Bulgaria,[13] and other parts of Eastern Europe were subordinated to the state after the model followed by the Moscow patriarchate. In Romania, the sizeable Greek Orthodox Church, an Eastern Rite Uniate church in communion with Rome, was forcibly incorporated into the Romanian Orthodox Church, as had been the Ukrainian Uniates with the Russian Orthodox.[14]

But countries dominated by a strong Catholic church were more of a problem, especially in places like Poland and Lithuania where the Catholic Church had been seen as the essential guardian of national identity. Under the tutelage of Soviet communists, the

Polish Workers' Party established the standard Stalinist apparatus for controlling religion, but it was clear that a heavy-handed approach would provoke a strong nationalistic reaction. So the Polish communists were forced to compromise far more than Stalin had with the Orthodox Church in Russia. For its part, the leadership of the Polish Catholic Church was also willing to compromise with the government for the sake of institutional survival.[15]

Thus, the government arrested Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the primate of the Polish church, in 1953 and kept him in confinement for three years. But faced with unrest (over food policy, not directly over religious policy) in 1956, the government released him and offered concessions to the church in return for its support for the regime. This pattern continued throughout the Polish communist regime: whenever the government was faced with economic or political crises, it would relax restrictions on the church in exchange for the bishops' supporting its legitimacy. When the government felt secure, it would tighten restrictions on the church. Overall, the Catholic Church had more freedom than in any other communist country. The government eliminated Catholic religious instruction from its public schools, but it allowed the church to carry out catechetical instruction in its parishes. It also allowed the continuance of the Catholic University of Lublin (where Karol Wojtyła, who would become Pope John Paul VI, received his doctorate and later held a chair in Catholic ethics), and it permitted Catholic seminaries and some Catholic media publications. Catholic prelates were allowed to travel abroad.[16]

The government's policy was aptly summed up by a head of the Office of Religious Affairs, who said: 'If we cannot destroy the church, we can at least stop it from causing harm.'[17] For his part, Cardinal Wyszyński, as leader of the Polish church, knew enough not to threaten the government with fundamental harm. He had his clergy focus on liturgy and religious instruction and told them to stay away from politics. When the government was faced with crises, he tried to bolster its position. The communist government in Poland managed to partially tame the Catholic Church, but for fear of provoking nationalistic resistance, they could not turn it into a hollowed-out shell.

In Hungary, on the other hand, the communists had somewhat greater success in applying Stalinist methods to subdue the Catholic Church. Part of the reason was that, although the great majority of Hungarians were Catholic, the church was more tightly identified with the old Austrian Habsburg aristocracy and less deeply embedded in popular conceptions of national identity. The attitudes of leaders on both sides also were an important factor. The Hungarian church did not have a compromise-minded primate like Cardinal Wyszyński. After the end of the Second World War, the leaders of the Hungarian Catholic Church, particularly the prince primate József Cardinal Mindszenty, expected the communist ascendancy to be brief and they used every means at their disposal to resist the communist government. For its part, the government was uncompromising in its attacks on the church. Priests and bishops were arrested, including Cardinal Mindszenty, who was subjected to a show trial and sentenced to prison in 1949. Meanwhile, all Catholic social organizations, schools, and publishing houses were closed. A group of pro-regime Priests for Peace was formed to bring pressure from

below on the hierarchy. For a long while, many of the jailed bishops were not replaced, so that the church lacked a coherent hierarchy. Those bishops who did get appointed were pressured into issuing pastoral letters supporting government domestic and foreign policies.[18]

In the revolution of 1956, Cardinal Mindszenty was released from prison and after the Soviet crackdown fled for protection to the American consulate in Budapest. There he remained until 1971, becoming a potent symbol in the Cold War anti-communist crusade, but because of his intransigence in later years something of an embarrassment to both more diplomatically minded Americans and the Vatican.[19]

In Eastern European countries such as Romania, divided between Orthodox and Roman Catholics, the Stalinist policy created other challenges. Besides the standard methods of suppressing and controlling the hierarchy, in Romania the government used the tactic of divide and conquer, not just between Orthodox and Roman Catholics, but between various sub-nationalities represented within the Catholic Church. When the Romanian government in 1948 forcibly incorporated the uniate Eastern Rite Church with the Romanian Orthodox Church, this did not endear Romania's Catholics to the Orthodox. Many Eastern Rite Catholics formed an underground church instead. Latin Rite Catholics were also persecuted even more severely than the Orthodox. Such policies had the unintended effect of creating sub-national divisions which would eventually cause severe political problems.

Somewhat similarly, in Czechoslovakia, the religion control policies had an unintended effect of deepening ethnic-nationalist tensions between Czechs and Slovaks. Like the Poles, Slovaks saw the Catholic Church as deeply connected with national identity. The Czechs had been more secularized, with a Catholicism deriving from Germanizing ecclesiastical control of the old Habsburg Empire. The repression created a more religiously-founded nationalistic piety among the Slovaks than the Czechs. The resulting divisions would contribute to the break-up of Czechoslovakia after the demise of communism.[20]

National divisions created by religious reactions to communism reached their most tragic level in Yugoslavia, where its dictator Josip Broz Tito had broken with the Soviet Union in 1948 and abandoned a Stalinist approach to governance. Facing a society divided among Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croatians, Catholic Slovenes, Orthodox Macedonians, and Muslim Bosnians and Kosovar Albanians, Tito tried to partially curb the influence of the different faiths but not completely suppress them. Concomitantly, he tried to construct a secular national ideology of 'brotherhood and unity', complete with national rituals and a national patriotic education system that could tie adherents of different faiths together. But even relatively moderate control of churches could provoke intense religious zeal. The archbishop of Zagreb, Bishop (later Cardinal) Alojzije Stepinac, was put on trial for allegedly having cooperated with the pro-Nazi Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War, a state whose Ustaša fighters had murdered large numbers of Serbians. Stepinac's Croatian supporters claimed that the war crimes' accusations were bogus and he was being persecuted because of his religious position. He later gained international fame as an anti-communist martyr.

His martyrdom intensified Croatian Catholic devotion, and his cause for canonization was eventually taken up by the Vatican. But many Serbs saw him as indeed a war criminal, and the Serbian Orthodox Church began to eventually to canonize its own saints who had been martyred by the Ustaša. Thus religious symbols and conflicting religiously-inflected historical memories of persecution helped stoke the flames of ethnic-nationalistic enmity between Serbs and Croatians. Meanwhile, even when the Yugoslav government offered a moderate degree of religious freedom under its banner of brotherhood and unity, the Catholic Church refused to cooperate because it was communist.[21]

After Tito died, such ethno-religious dynamics would lead to a complete abandoning of all brotherhood and unity and to tragic wars between Serbs and Croatians, and between both Serbs and Croatians and Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The perpetrators of the terrible violence were not necessarily piously religious. Radovan Karadžić, the nationalist leader of Bosnian Serbs (and indicted war criminal), said in 1990, 'The Serbian Orthodox Church is not merely a religious organization, it is a cultural institution and part of national leadership; the Church is highly important for all Serbs, and it is irrelevant whether one believes in God or not.'[22]

The Failure of Communist Suppression of Religion

Karadžić's statement offers a clue to why the communist attempt to eliminate religion failed. It was in the end based on the premise that religion was simply a product of material conditions, part of the 'superstructure' built upon the 'economic base'. Once socialism ended exploitation and brought a materially satisfying life for all, people would naturally abandon religion, they would destroy the idols they themselves had made. But these premises have turned out to be false. Humans indeed do not live by bread alone. The 'idols' are symbols, embodying multilayered meanings and memories that have accumulated over a long history. The meanings may be reinterpreted and used to guide different patterns of action, but they cannot easily be erased. Many people apprehend their communities' symbols with a mixture of belief and unbelief. Under some circumstances, powerfully resonant symbols can be used cynically even by those who do not personally believe in them.

In the Soviet Union, the Stalinist policy was successful in weakening the Orthodox Church and turning it into an instrument for advancing government interests. To some degree with the cooperation of the compliant Orthodox hierarchy, the policy was also successful in destroying the capacity of minority religions, like Baptists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah's Witnesses, to mount any serious political opposition. For many years, the policy was also successful in quieting any political opposition from Muslim-dominated republics in Central Asia.[23] The restrictions on religious practice also led to a great

decrease in numbers of people taking part in public worship. But although religious institutions were weakened, the meanings and memories embodied in religious symbols remained alive. Communist policies did not destroy them, but changed the ways in which they were expressed and used.

Khrushchev's crude attempts to destroy religion actually seemed to have provoked a backlash in the form of fervent pockets of underground faith. Accordingly, the Brezhnev regime ended the attempts at political suppression and returned to the containment policy of the later Stalin years. But the pockets of underground fervour remained. Such fervour became especially consequential in the 1970s, as economic stagnation and social demoralization (evinced in alcoholism, petty crime, and lack of work discipline) manifested the failure of the socialist system to deliver on its promises of a better life for all. Under such circumstances, religious symbols and religious traditions could be drawn upon to offer visions of a better life. In 1975, the final version of the Helsinki Accords presented new, although limited, opportunities for freedom of expression, and expressions of religiously based dissent became more visible.

An effect of the Stalinist policies had been to discredit the religious leadership of the co-opted church hierarchy. It was thus lower clergy and laity who offered new formulations of orthodox religious traditions in defiance of both the hierarchy and the government. The most famous Orthodox lay dissident was Alexander Solzhenitsyn. In his Lenten Letter of 1971, he denounced the church leadership for its collaboration with the communist regime.[24]

Solzhenitsyn and other Orthodox dissidents were reaching back to the tradition of nineteenth-century Slavophiles, who in opposition to the secular intelligentsia, sought to find answers to the problems of modernity in a renewal of Russia's religious traditions. The late-twentieth-century Slavophiles were a diverse group. Published mostly in samizdat, their writings contained a wide range of visions for the future. For instance, Solzhenitsyn's position could be roughly characterized as liberal-democratic, but others, like Gennadi Shimanov, might be considered right-wing nationalist (with more than a hint of antisemitism). All of them were persecuted both by the Soviet government and the leadership of the Orthodox Church. When Solzhenitsyn was exiled in 1974, the Orthodox metropolitan of Krutitsy and Kolomna pronounced that 'In the eyes of believers of the Russian Orthodox Church he has long forfeited the right to call himself a Christian'.[25]

But the religious dissident movement continued throughout the 1970s. Its most well-known clergyman was Fr. Gleb Yakunin, a priest from Moscow who in 1976 founded the 'Christian Committee in Defence of the Rights of Believes in the USSR'. His committee produced copious documentation on violations of religious freedom, which led to his arrest in 1979 on charges of 'anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation'. At his trial in 1980, church officials served as witnesses for the prosecution.[26] Finally, by 1980 there emerged Islamic dissident movements in the Central Asian republics stirred up by the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan.

In Poland, the election of Karol Wojtyła as Pope John Paul II in 1978 and his triumphant return visit to Poland in 1979 generated intense religious-nationalistic enthusiasm

that led to the Solidarity labour movement of 1980. This was however primarily a lay movement, and the Polish church hierarchy tried to constrain its more radical elements. In September 1980 Cardinal Wyszyński gave a sermon, broadcast on state television, encouraging strikers to return to work.[27] But when the Polish government under General Wojciech Jaruzelski suppressed the independent labour movement and declared martial law in 1981, Wyszyński and his successor Cardinal Józef Glemp tried to mediate the conflict in the name of social stability.[28] From Rome, however, Pope John Paul II gave his blessing to Solidarity in January 1981 (and cooperated with the American CIA to support it).[29]

In other parts of Eastern Europe during the 1980s the pattern was similar. Although in Poland a large percentage of the population had maintained a high level of Catholic piety, many of these other societies had low levels of church attendance and low rates of professed belief. Nonetheless, religious revival and religious dissidence could still have powerful social consequences. It was lay activists, coming out of youth groups or 'base communities' (small groups seeking Christian renewal through prayer and Bible study) that took the lead in resisting communist governments, while the government-approved hierarchies acted as a moderating force. In ways that neither side may have intended, this combination could become powerfully effective. In East Germany, the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church had been willing to help the regime build a socialist society, and this gave it enough protection from government interference that dissident groups could use it as a free space to carry out acts of resistance.

In Yugoslavia, after the death of Tito in 1981, religious hierarchies (which had not been as tightly controlled as in Stalinist states) played a greater role in arousing dissent, but, intended or not, it was sometimes a tragic role. By the end of the Tito years, all religions in Yugoslavia had low levels of church attendance and professed belief. To revitalize their faiths, the religious leaders now promoted their faiths as carriers of cultural nationalism—Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, and Albanian nationalism. This allowed each nationality's sacred shrines and holy myths to be used by scoundrels like Karadžić, Milošević, Tuđman, and Izetbegović to mobilize their communities in brutal war against one another.[30]

Although top-down religious institutions in China were completely subordinate to the state, by the 1960s the gods and ghosts of 'superstitious' folk religion were springing back to life, their reality perhaps confirmed by the craziness of the disastrous Great Leap Forward and their veneration made possible by the relatively relaxed rural policies adopted in the wake of the famine induced by the Great Leap. And far from the central authorities, grass-roots Catholics and Protestants were receiving visions and witnessing miracles in a world still alive to the presence of God. By 1964, however, Mao Zedong issued a call to 'never forget the class struggle' and ordered work teams to carry out a 'Socialist Education Campaign' in the countryside, primarily aimed at rooting out new forms of official corruption, but also entailing condemnation of folk religious practices. The Socialist Education Campaign was a prelude to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, from 1966 to 1976. During the first phase of that movement, inspired by Mao's charisma, the whole apparatus of the party-state was torn down. One of the 'Red

Guards'' initial targets was the Four Olds—old ideas, culture, customs, and habits—which included all manifestations of religion. Precious artefacts were destroyed, religious practitioners tortured and imprisoned. The whole Stalinist state apparatus for controlling religion was torn down and even those hierarchs who had cooperated with the government were imprisoned. Notwithstanding, there was something strangely religious about the fanaticism. Mao Zedong was worshipped as a deity. There were ritual 'loyalty dances' to honour him, and the Little Red Book of his quotations was a talisman that could cure cancer and confer extraordinary power.[31]

The Cultural Revolution did not wipe out religion. Its chaos and cruelty may have actually spurred on a quest for ultimate concerns. In the Reform era launched by Deng Xiaoping in 1979, millions of local temples have been rebuilt (Mao Zedong is worshipped in some of them), an astonishing rapid growth of evangelical Christianity has taken place, and Tibetan Buddhist monks have risked their lives (and sometimes given their lives—over forty immolated themselves in protest in 2012) to maintain the integrity of their faith and demonstrate their loyalty to the exiled Dalai Lama. Meanwhile, a vigorous 'underground' Catholic Church complements the officially recognized Catholic hierarchy, and Muslims from a variety of Sunni and Sufi traditions build mosques and schools and connect with the worldwide *umma* by going on the haj.

But the Cultural Revolution transformed Chinese religion. The growth of Christianity has been especially vigorous in areas where the Cultural Revolution had most thoroughly obliterated the traditional folk religion. And new religions have arisen out of practices that were officially approved as non-religious during the Cultural Revolution. In the name of demonstrating its superiority to the West, the Chinese Communist leadership had promoted the practice of *qigong*, a manipulation of vital energies to bring health and long life that had its roots in the Daoist tradition. This was seen not as religion but as indigenous Chinese science. But when, in the 1980s and 1990s, charismatic *qigong* masters began to attract large numbers of followers, including some high-level members of the party and army, the party leadership suddenly recognized these mystical practices as a form of heterodox religion, or as they call it, 'evil cult'. Since 1999 there have been brutal crackdowns on Falungong and similar *qigong* movements, creating much suffering and many refugees who have spread the teaching worldwide. In China, remnants of these new religious movements exist underground.[32]

The Chinese Communist Party has resorted to its 1950s, Stalin-derived policies for controlling religion, but the policies are not working, the growth and dynamic evolution of religious practices seems out of control, and the party leadership seems bewildered about what to do.[33]

Similar dilemmas confront communist parties in Indochina. In Laos, the Communist Party has allowed Buddhism to flourish because it represents core values of the national culture. In Vietnam, the Party has a moderate degree of effective control over the Catholic Church, which comprises about 7 per cent of the population, but it has to contend with dynamic growth of local popular religion. One example is a grass-roots religious movement with thousands of followers led by a woman with miraculous healing powers which worships 'Uncle Hồ Chí Minh' as the 'Jade Buddha of the Nation'.[34]

Only in North Korea has overt expression of religion been almost completely suppressed. But this is accomplished by a personality cult that elevates Kim Il Sung, his son, and now his grandson to deity-like status, with accompanying rituals and sacred myths.

Religious Legacies of Communism

Although the history of religion under communism is not completely over, it has certainly entered a new phase. What is the legacy of 'classic communism' for religion today?

A lasting effect has been a restructuring of the relationship between grass-roots religious belief and practice and hierarchical institutions. The policies of the Stalinist states tried to eliminate the public relevance of religion by weakening its major institutions and co-opting hierarchical leaders of such institutions to serve the state. The result was a discrediting of such leaders in the eyes of many ordinary believers. This institutional weakening has actually led to dynamic new forms of grass-roots-led religious creativity—to a luxuriant growth of heresies.

Many of these take the form of private religious practice, allowing individuals to cultivate personal spiritualities outside an oppressive public sphere. In the Soviet Union there was a widespread fascination with both old non-Christian practices, such as astrology, and New Age explorations of the occult. For example, many Russians were fascinated with 'UFO-ology', a belief that visitors from outer space would arrive to save the earth from its travails. In Cuba, regular attendance at the Catholic mass is very low, but there is a widespread practice of santeria. As we have seen, in China and Vietnam, there is a widespread revival of folk religious practices as well as the development of new religious movements.

Other grass-roots religious movements have attempted to recover the authentic teachings of institutionalized religions from their corruption by communist co-opted hierarchies. Often, these took a publicly prophetic turn, as in the Slavophile dissidents in Russia. In this way, religiously inspired activism entered the public sphere, often to the discomfort of official church leaders. Sometimes, lay initiatives that the official leaders had instigated turned towards directions that they would not have anticipated and could not fully control. This may have been the case of the 'base communities' in Hungary and also with the 'charismatic movements' that sprang up in that country. Some lay movements were inspired by the vast festival-like outpourings of fervour that came from Pope John Paul II's visits to Poland and other Slavic countries. Others sprang from the celebration of the the Great Novena of the Millennium in Poland in 1957–66 and the Orthodox Christian millennium in Russia in 1988. Still other explosions of enthusiasm came from the alleged apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Međjugorje in a Croatian district of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1980s. And throughout the Catholic parts of Eastern Europe there was fascination with the prophecies of Our Lady of Fatima (who appeared to three children in Portugal in 1917) which, it was said, predicted both the rise and demise of communism.

In several crucial instances, such lay movements, evolving in directions that wary church hierarchs could not completely control, played an important role in the demise of European communism. The activism of Solidarity in Poland, inspired in the first instance by religious enthusiasm, but of course embodying many economic and political interests, opened the path to the downfall of the communist government in Poland. Religiously inspired activists also played significant roles in the toppling of communist regimes in Lithuania, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. In Central Asia, Islamist activists, angered by the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, began to play an important political role, independently of the established *ulema.* In China, a disproportionate number of the 'rights lawyers' who are bravely fighting for protection of human rights supposedly guaranteed in the Chinese Constitution are Christians connected with urban 'house churches'.

Contrary to classic secularization theorists who assumed that modernization everywhere would relegate religion to the private sphere, religions everywhere are demanding to be given a place in public life.

A legacy of communism in post-communist societies has been a tension between a religiously inspired laity and a partially discredited hierarchy. A major issue in this tension is how religion should engage in public life—through political machinations at the top or inspired action from below. In parts of the former Soviet Union and its sometime satellites, Orthodox and Catholic Church leaders are trying to give their institutions a place in the state establishment similar to what they had before the arrival of communism. In Russia, the Orthodox patriarchate relies on government money to rebuild and refurbish churches and to pay the salaries of its priests. It also seeks government help in barring missionaries from other religions. Some Orthodox leaders have advocated restoring or expanding the Russian Empire that was lost with the collapse of the USSR—but this time tying the empire together through allegiance with the Orthodox Church. As we have seen, there were those among the Slavophile dissidents in the 1970s who expressed a similar messianic vision. But there are other lay believers who would have rejected it. By now, it seems that the Putin government is not going to support the most fervent dreams of the empire-extenders. However, Putin does give the Orthodox a quasi-established place in Russia and he relies on it to support his authoritarian rule.

In Poland, the Catholic hierarchy (urged on by the Pope) has pushed the government to enact legislation that would subject all citizens to Catholic teaching—for example to ban abortion, restrict birth control, and require Catholic instruction in all schools. This continues to cause great controversy in Poland. The Polish poet Czesław Miłosz complained that 'the Church was seeking for itself the status and authority that earlier belonged to the Communist Party and that the people began to fear priests and bishops and look at religion with disgust because of the "sins of triumphalism" and the tendency toward establishing state religions'.[35] The bishops want to use their newly acquired power to directly influence government leaders. Some lay people have been energized by Catholic social movements to cherish the notion of a democratic, pluralistic civil society and want to promote their vision of a Catholic common good in democratic public life from the bottom up and with respect for the conscience of citizens who do not

share their faith. Other Catholics, especially in the younger generations, simply ignore the moral teachings of the church, especially with regard to sexuality.

All major religions promise to infuse public life with love and justice, but all of them also contain seeds of hatred and division. Communism provided an environment for these bad seeds to germinate. Religious leaders must share some of the blame with communist officials. The most dangerous legacy of religion under communism is the effort of some religious leaders to bolster their weakened position by linking their religion to nationalist sentiments. The most tragic manifestation of this was the Balkan wars within the wreckage of the former Yugoslavia. All too often, Orthodox Serbian, Catholic Croatian, and Bosnian Muslim leaders preached peace and reconciliation, only after advertently or inadvertently having inflamed a sense of militant nationalism. Similar violent conflicts, enhanced at least partially by religious zeal, have occurred in the Caucasus, in wars between Orthodox Armenia and Muslim Azerbaijan, between Muslim and Christian groups in Georgia and Ossetia, and between Russians and Muslims in Chechnya.[36] In all cases, many factors besides religion are at work, and religious leaders on all sides have offered to mediate the conflicts. But religious prejudices and religious grievances have added a share of fuel to the fires. A more harmonious relationship between religious leaders and followers might have brought more order to some of these conflicts. A legacy of communism has been damage to those relationships.

Atheistic communism did not destroy religion. Parts of the former Soviet bloc have higher percentages of religious belief and a higher participation of religion in public life than Western Europe. But communism changed religion. It undermined older forms of religious authority even as it provoked new manifestations of faith. The legacy is not a triumph of the justice and charity that all major religions profess, but new mixtures of faith and doubt, harmony and conflict in an anxious world.

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CHAPTER 35

SPORT UNDER COMMUNISM

ROBERT EDELMAN, ANKE HILBRENNER, AND SUSAN BROWNELL

There was no single Marxist-Leninist approach to sport under communism. To be sure, the Soviet, East European, and Chinese experiences share things in common. The state played a significant role in promoting sport and ties to the structures of force (military and police) were strong. National training centres and sports schools served to refine the young plucked from their homes and places of education. High-performance sport, as opposed to mass physical culture, came to receive the lion's share of resources. Mass displays and other rituals were central parts of the way states sought to teach their publics important lessons about fitness, health, military preparedness, and labour efficiency. Like Leo Tolstoy's 'happy families', communist sports systems had much in common, but one ideologically driven size did not fit all. The lived history of sport under communism is a much more various and complicated story.

Because the USSR was the first communist nation, its sporting evolution inevitably established models for those that came later. At least initially, the new government called for a variety of sports and exercises to generate fit soldiers for the young Red Army. Yet, in the wake of the revolution and subsequent civil war, the triumphant Bolsheviks found themselves with few, if any, acceptable ways to approach the matter of sport. The creation of socialist forms of physical culture and athletic activity was up for grabs, a process made all the more difficult by the political left's historic discomfort with play, entertainment, and even the human body.

The past experience of the Russian empire seemed inadequate as a base on which to build. Under tsarism, Olympic performances were poor. Subsequent research, however, has revealed a lively sporting scene on the eve of the revolution, especially in the capital of St Petersburg and to a lesser extent in Moscow. James Riordan, Victor Peppard, Louise McReynolds, and Ekaterina Emeliantseva have all described a dynamic urban middle class which came to play sports and create institutions that generated group identities

and displayed the growing cultural and political power of the bourgeoisie. Earlier, the aristocracy had practised and enjoyed a variety of sporting activities, most notably equestrianism, fencing, gymnastics, and yachting.[1]

Not all this activity can be called home grown. Rather, it was extensively supported by the large, business-oriented expatriate community (primarily British) who brought their own games with them. Dues-paying bourgeois clubs took up football and other sports which they played with passion if not skill. By the eve of the civil war, several clubs had surrounded their playing fields with fences in order to charge admission fees for matches, primarily football, that were part of organized leagues. Members of the two capitals' subordinate social groups gradually became aware of these activities. Some came to watch, and even more wished to play. This demonstration effect had occurred all over the globe as the informal British empire of businessmen, managers, engineers, and skilled workers diffused soccer throughout the world. In most places ordinary folk came to take over the game, squeezing out the original British-dominated clubs in a flood of proletarian participation. Russians from the lower middle and working classes played the game, but they did so outside the structures of the organized leagues and clubs. Elsewhere, football had proved to be a shared passion that blunted class differences. In the Russian empire, by contrast, class differences were exacerbated by the resistance of the privileged to the participation of their less well-off fellow citizens. Before that situation could change, the revolution intervened, forcing the revolutionary government to start anew.

The history of athletic activity under capitalism provided two models for organizing and propagating sport, the professional and the elite amateur models. Neither was a comfortable fit for the Bolsheviks. Both approaches had been historically constructed by the Victorian middle class of the United Kingdom, but only one had found resonance with the rest of the population. The professional-entertainment model turned sport into a profit-making enterprise and athletes into commodities who performed for mass audiences. At the same time, games that had emerged in Britain's elite academic institutions were later taken up by working people in their millions, a trend that many socialists viewed with horror, fearing that it would divert the working class from its historically ordained revolutionary task. In reaction to the rise of professional sport, a cult of amateurism emerged among the social elites of Europe and North America. But its inherent elitism was most clearly spelled out in the doctrines of Pierre de Coubertin's Olympism, where sport was to be limited to those who did not work with their hands and bodies. Both professionalism and amateurism, as they evolved over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were 'male bastions' which consciously excluded women, a fact that also repelled many socialists.[2]

Competitive sport, with its implicitly hierarchical character, was finally embraced by the Communist Party in 1925, but as early as 1920 soccer clubs in neighbourhoods, factories, and other institutions had been fencing off fields, selling tickets to their games, and operating as small, locally based enterprises. They functioned on the semi-professional basis permitted under the partial capitalism of the period known as the New Economic Plan (NEP; 1921–9). Star players became celebrities who cavorted in the rich night life

of the era. Professional boxing and wrestling shows were held in buildings used for circuses. The Hippodrome held a daily card of horse races. At the same time, a wide range of sports on the Olympic programme, many with military uses, began to be cultivated by the various sports clubs that emerged with the support of the multiple institutions of early Soviet society. The best endowed of these was the Dinamo Sport Society, founded in 1923 with the support of the secret police. The army had its club, as did various trade unions.

The culmination of NEP sport came in the summer of 1928 with an Olympic-style festival called the Spartakiad. This event, organized by the Communist Red Sport International, attracted thousands of Soviet and hundreds of foreign competitors, male and female. Nearly all the participants came from urban areas, and far more of them were white-collar than were blue-collar. Scarcely any peasants, the vast majority of the population, took part. Factory workers, still a minority element, preferred instead to play and watch football, the only sport at the Spartakiad that filled the 35,000 seat Dinamo Stadium built for the event.

The Spartakiad, an Olympic-style, multi-sport festival, appealed to the Stalinist leadership which put in place the foundations of the later state-supported sport system. During the 1930s attention had been paid and resources had been provided for a wide range of sports. This activity was not limited to men. At the same time, women were banned from football, which provided entertainment for millions of male workers in Soviet cities. With the USSR's triumph in World War II, this system exploded onto the world's sporting scene. Just as the USSR quickly joined the United Nations, so did their various sporting federations join the world's leading athletic bodies, including FIFA (football), FIBA (basketball), and the IAAF (athletics). The Dinamo Moscow football club made its glorious tour of Great Britain in the autumn of 1945, and Stalin, who did not care about sport, came to see the diplomatic advantages of such international contacts.[3]

With an eye on the formally amateur Olympic Games, the open payment of athletes, never a secret, was ended in 1947. In December of the next year, the Communist Party enunciated the goal of dominating world sport. After a renewed period of isolation and xenophobia between 1948 and 1951, the USSR then re-emerged to join the Olympic movement and take part in the 1952 Summer Games at Helsinki. A close second place in the unofficial medal count was the first step in a later domination of the Winter and Summer Games that lasted, with brief interruptions, until the final collapse of Soviet communism itself. Women had played important roles from the earliest days of the sport system, and this took on added meaning in international competition. This emphasis was consistent with communist claims about gender equality in the USSR, but it also came to take on a highly useful function after the war. Female participation in sport in capitalist nations was poorly developed, and the Soviets sensed an opportunity to win medals and gain prestige in events where the West was weak. The successes of Soviet sportswomen did not, however, reflect the everyday difficulties of ordinary women in the USSR. Nevertheless, their athletic triumphs inspired and challenged women the world over and proved a powerful impulse for the growth of female sport.

Having started as opponents of Olympism, the Soviet state came to embrace the movement during the Cold War. The emphasis on using formally amateur sport to impress both the outside world and the domestic population proved a shrewd choice. Domination of the Games meant winning the most medals, and winning those medals required contesting virtually all events on the Olympic programme, regardless of their popularity (or unpopularity) within the USSR. In capitalist nations, the best sporting talent flowed to the comparatively few remunerative sports dominated by professionals. By falsely proclaiming all their sportsmen and women to be amateurs, the Soviets boosted their prospects in the global cultural contest for the hearts and minds of the world. International competitions, not just the Olympics, also raised the stakes domestically. Such contests were no longer simply games but rather 'examinations' of Soviet sport and, by implication, of Soviet society and communism itself. At the same time, all realms of culture were sites for the display of soft power designed to enhance that amorphous and slippery concept called national prestige.

As it turned out, what came to be tendentiously called the 'Big Red Machine' was well suited to the command economy. The decision to contest all Olympic events was made by the Communist Party. Coaches and scouts combed the USSR's vast demographic pool for children who had the body types, talents, and skills to become elite athletes. The best of them were sent to national sport centres and boarding schools. Others were nurtured in multi-sports clubs known as Voluntary Sport Societies (Dinamo, Spartak, TsSKA, Lomomotiv, and Torpedo to name a few). Young athletes specialized in the sports for which their bodies were best suited, not those they may have loved best. Despite boasting claims to the contrary, the infrastructure for sport was always rather weak. Soviet coaches could not wait for the athletes to come to them. Regular schools offered limited opportunities and facilities for training. The sports system was designed instead to get the most efficient results from what were limited resources. Soviet high-performance athletes were not, as was claimed, the tip of a vast pyramid of participants. Instead, they composed a very narrow layer of talent that rested on long, rotting, and none too numerous stilts. Rather than reflecting the strength of communism, sport in the USSR, a kind of giant Potemkin village, masked the larger system's many weaknesses.[4]

Throughout the years of superpower confrontation the USSR was always a much poorer country than the United States, not to mention the nations of Western Europe. Despite the great visibility of Soviet sport and physical culture throughout the larger world, athletic activity never played a central role in Soviet life. When the USSR eventually came to contest Western professionals in some of the most popular spectator sports (football, ice hockey, and basketball), the record was far less impressive than at the Olympics. Soviet state professionals lost as often as they won when taking on capitalism's best, and this mix of success and failure, as opposed to Olympic dominance, more accurately reflects the limited but still significant place of sport in the first communist state. After World War II football, by far the most popular game in the USSR, was played against Western professionals. Yet, football provided as much pain as it did pleasure for both the authorities and the millions of ordinary folk who were its fans. Whether on the level of club or country, Soviet international successes were few. Yet, it became an article

of faith (if not proven fact) that many male citizens of the USSR would have traded all the Olympic gold for one World Cup.

While triumphs against professionals were not abundant, the USSR did produce a number of world-class talents who attracted the attention of capitalist clubs. Stars like the great goalie Lev Yashin, the midfielder Igor Netto, and the striker Oleg Blokhin could have played for any club in Europe, but the requirement of maintaining the fiction of Olympic eligibility led all inquiries to be rebuffed. The same was true for ice hockey and, to a lesser extent, basketball. Eventually, things began to change in the late 1980s. Within the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev had initiated the reforms he dubbed 'perestroika', a process that involved the emulation of certain capitalist models, in this case professional sport. At the same time the standards of Olympic eligibility were changing under the impact of commercialization and globalization. Soviet footballers began to show up in Western Europe in 1987, becoming famous and earning hard currency for the motherland. After 1989, when distinctions between amateurs and professionals were largely abandoned by the Olympic movement, hockey and basketball players signed to play in the elite North American leagues. Elite Soviet athletes quickly became part of a global sporting monoculture that emerged on the eve of communism's death.

In the last days of the USSR, the state could no longer play its historic role of sponsor and organizer of all activities. Clearly, Soviet sport was a system that had many pathologies. It was often corrupt. Performances were pharmacologically enhanced. Those who did not measure up were callously discarded. Athletes were made to lie about their actual work. Yet Soviet sport had sought to provide alternatives to the profit-making spectacles that have now come to dominate the capitalist sporting scene. Since communism's disappearance, some have concluded there is only this way to organize, produce, and understand sporting spectacles. Yet Soviet sport gave us a way to imagine something better than the commercialized, globalized, and often alienated spectacles of our present day.

By contrast, Eastern Europe turned to communism only after World War II. Before the war most of these countries had established highly developed systems of sporting institutions. This included spectator sports, notably football, which was very popular in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Austria. The so-called 'Danubian School' attracted high numbers of spectators along with players and managers from abroad. In Czechoslovakia a professional league was established in 1924, which gave rise to one of many sporting 'Golden Ages'. Sports clubs and institutions relied primarily on the upper middle class for athletes, coaches, and sponsors, although all elements of society were involved in sports in some way. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania were all characterized by ethnic diversity, as sporting clubs formed across and along social, national, cultural, or political lines.[5]

World War II erased this ethnic diversity with mass killings, expulsions, and the redrawing of boundaries. The established institutions of sport were turned upside down. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were still multi-national, but the German element, which had been important before and during the war, was now missing. The post-war situation left nation states living up to long-held aspirations of cultural homogeneity for

the first time in their existence. This historical moment coincided with the communists' rise to power, and the mixture of local nationalism and communist internationalism was one of the many ambiguities of the late 1940s in what were called 'the people's democracies'. The East European communist countries adopted the Soviet model in the sphere of sports. Many of the institutions established in the interwar period disappeared, such as the flourishing Jewish sport scene in Poland, as well as many bourgeois sports clubs. Other institutions took on Soviet names and were integrated into administrative units or sectors of production. In Czechoslovakia, for example, the Sokol Slavic gymnastic movement maintained its central position even under communism. Sokol ('falcon') had been bourgeois and outspokenly nationalistic during the interwar period and was not well suited to serve the interest of a communist state. Yet the institutional framework of this large and powerful group could function as a centralizing force, so Sokol kept its name and continued under the new regime.[6]

Sports institutions in the army or secret police were founded or reorganized in all of the East European communist states according to the Soviet model. Additionally, a sophisticated system of talent spotting and recruitment was established. The elite sports were supposed to rely on a broad foundation of sport for all, based on the school system. This ideal was not met by every communist state, but the GDR did pioneer intensive and systematic sports promotion from the bottom up, providing a model of how Communist sports ought to function. In 1945 the Soviet military administration in the Soviet zone of occupation abolished the former sports clubs. The Free German Trade-Union Federation (FDGB) and Free German Youth (FDJ) founded the German Sports Committee (DS) in 1948. In 1957 the German Gymastics and Sports Associations (DTSB) took over the central administration of sporting activities in the GDR. The old bourgeois sports clubs were replaced by so-called Enterprise Associations (Betriebsgemeinschaften, BSG). Funded by the labour unions and with union structures imposed on them from 1950, these BSGs offered a wide range of disciplines. They were generally named after the union that sponsored them: 'Traktor', for example, represented the agricultural sector. 'Dynamo' clubs were founded under the auspices of the ministry of the interior and its secret police, just as in the Soviet Union.

The organization of sports institutions on the basis of production units meant that athletes formally employed by the BSGs could be counted as amateurs and be eligible to participate in the Olympic Games. This was criticized as 'state-amateurism', especially by competing nations in the West. The search for talent was pursued predominantly within the educational system, with teachers watching out for talented young athletes. Additionally, a huge number of tournaments helped to identify talented youth for training to international standards, especially in Olympic sports. Spartakiads for children and youth on an all-GDR scale were organized from 1952 onwards. The most talented children were sent to central training points or boarding schools specializing in sports such as swimming, athletics, gymnastics, or ice-skating. In general, participation in sport by schoolchildren and youth was high, although the official claim that there was mass participation in sport by citizens of all ages was never true.

The East European communist countries participated in the Olympic movement on the basis of the National Olympic Committees that had been established in the interwar period. Albania joined the Olympic movement only in 1958–9, while the committee of the GDR, founded in 1951, was officially recognized by the International Olympic Committee only in 1965. There were some bi- and multilateral sports contacts within the Eastern Bloc, yet there were hardly any multi-national sport institutions, and the first tournament for Eastern Bloc countries did not take place until 1984, when the Druzhba-84 Games were organized in response to the boycott of the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. The Olympics Games were what mattered to communist states, and they chose not to participate in some 'bourgeois' international sports institutions and events. From 1953, for example, they boycotted the Maccabiah Games, which take place every four years in Israel, and when Indonesia tried to set up a new event, the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO), in opposition to the Olympic Games, East European countries participated but generally sent second-rank athletes.

The Olympics were the international arena in which the GDR strove to prove the supremacy of its system over that of the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1952 the East German National Olympic Committee had refused to attend the games unless it were granted its own national team; but this emerged only with the 1968 Olympic Games. Prior to that, in the 1956, 1960, and 1964 games, the GDR competed in a unified team with West Germany. In the unofficial medal count GDR athletes soon climbed into third position, ranking directly after the USSR and the USA. Constantly outshone by the Federal Republic of Germany in other spheres, the GDR delighted in demonstrating the superiority of its social system on the sports field. Ironically, the Federal Republic adopted certain features of the GDR system during preparations for the 1972 Olympics in Munich.[7] The politics of participation in the Olympic Games transformed athletes from communist countries into 'diplomats in track suits', and not only in the GDR. Eastern-bloc athletes generally were supposed to represent the ideal communist lifestyle. And the successful performance of communist sportswomen, in particular, was deemed proof of equal opportunities in the East European states.[8]

Another reason why women from the communist states of Eastern Europe won the majority of female medals in the Olympic Games was that women responded more to doping practices than men. Steroids cause a bigger growth of muscle in females than in males, and in the GDR the systematic manipulation of the athletic body enhanced the performance of female athletes especially. The Western capitalist countries reacted to this challenge not only by employing their own doping, but also seeking to discredit female athletes from the Eastern bloc because of their supposed masculinity. Sportswomen from communist countries in disciplines such as the discus, shot put, and track and field events were ridiculed as 'mannish'.

Sport was thus a battlefield in the Cold War, where everybody could take part through the mass media and gossip.[9] Even though the Games were the media mega-event, team sports were also immensely popular throughout Eastern Europe, just as they were in the USSR. Soccer was the most popular spectator sport, followed by ice hockey and basketball. Despite the official rhetoric of 'friendship among the peoples', events in which

national teams from the communist countries competed were often an occasion for the expression of nationalist sentiment. In Poland soccer matches featuring the national team were moments when Polish nationalism could be expressed without fear of retaliation. In 1957, when Poland and the USSR competed in the qualifying round for the 1958 World Cup in Chorzow, the surprise victory of the Polish team gave rise to a wave of anti-Soviet sentiment, though this was quickly covered up.[10] Similar anti-Soviet sentiment was displayed at international ice-hockey games between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union following the Prague Spring in 1968. Especially important was the second match between the teams on 28 March 1969 when Czechoslovakia won. More than 10,000 fans rioted in Prague, chanting anti-Soviet slogans and burning down the Prague office of Aeroflot. Sports events thus provided a field of rivalry not only between the communist and capitalist world but also between countries within the communist bloc. Competitions between Eastern European countries, especially those with the Soviet Union, were emotionally charged events for the spectators and were dreaded by the players because they were often extremely aggressive. Anti-social behaviour on the part of fans was also fanned by nationalist or extreme right-wing ideologies that challenged communism.[11]

Teams from Eastern Europe in spectator sports at times competed successfully with their Western counterparts. The high point of Polish football came at the 1972 Olympics when the national team won the gold medal. Victory was made sweeter by the fact that along the way the Poles beat the Soviet team. In the 1974 World Cup in Germany, although Poland lost to the champions, Germany, in the semi-final, Grzegorz Boleslaw Lato was the leading scorer of the tournament. In Yugoslavia following the Tito-Stalin split in the late 1940s, the government chose a different path in sports politics, one that aspired not to replicate mainstream communist sport development. They did this by trying to create an axis with Third World countries, an attempt to forge a 'third way'. However, Yugoslavia too enjoyed some success in international sports, such as football and basketball, the country's two most popular sports.[12]

Following victory in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party sought to establish a national sports system modelled on that of the Soviet Union. China, in contrast to the 'socialist big brother', already had a national sports system that had largely been organized by the American YMCA after the American model, utilizing missionary schools and universities as the grassroots base.[13] Following the annexation of the Philippines by the US in the wake of the Spanish American War of 1898, that country had become the launching pad for the expansion of the YMCA throughout East Asia.[14] The YMCA organized the first Far Eastern Championships in Manila in 1913, followed by ten quadrennial instalments before tensions over Japan's military aggression brought them to a close in 1934. Most East Asian physical educators were either educated in Western missionary schools, or were sent to Springfield College, the YMCA's training base in the US.[15] East Asia thus became the site of the world's first regional games, laying the foundation for the later hosting of the first Olympic Games outside the developed West.[16]

After 1949 the construction of the national sports system brought together two components with very different ideological backgrounds. The communists denounced the

YMCA network, which drew its athletes from Western (mainly Christian) schools and colleges, for its elitism, since sports were accessible only to the small number of people who gained entry to Western schools or who could afford to join sports clubs in the Western concessions in Shanghai, Tianjin, Hong Kong, and elsewhere. However, the Chinese sportspeople who came out of this system were well-educated and committed sports enthusiasts. They provided the backbone of physical education expertise and international connections from 1949 onward, and indeed some of them still held important positions when China hosted the Olympics in 2008. The second institutional component was modelled after the Soviet Union and built on the Chinese Communists' own tradition. The Chinese Communists were famous for using basketball to keep soldiers fit and provided with recreation in the north-western Yan'an revolutionary base in the 1930s, following the retreat from Nationalist-controlled areas during the Long March. After 1949 they built on this tradition, with the National Workers' Games in 1950, the first sports meet of the new Republic. The first National Games were held in 1959, and became a regular patriotic celebration from then on. While the sports system was staffed by YMCA-trained educators and coaches, cadres, often from a military background, held the highest leadership positions in sports organizations and provided the ideological guidance until 2000, when the first director of the State Sports Commission from a non-military background was appointed, former women's volleyball coach Yuan Weimin.

Large numbers of Soviet sports experts were sent to China to provide the expertise to set up and run the new system. Not until the reform era, beginning in 1978, did the number of visiting coaches and sports scientists from Europe and North America start gradually to outnumber the Soviets. East Germans also had a strong presence. In contrast to the Soviet system, the training of elite athletes was located in a government-led structure comprised of some three thousand sports boarding schools with three major tiers—local, provincial, or municipal, and national. The strongest team in the new system was the People's Liberation Army Club, which won every National Games but one prior to 1983, although it was the only team in the National Games that was not run by a provincial or municipal government. It was not until the era of reform that the first industry team—representing the railroad system—competed in the 1983 National Games, and after that the number of industry-supported teams (e.g. banking, coal mining, oil, water, and electricity) began slowly to increase, reaching fourteen in 2009. This system was under the State Commission for Physical Education and Sport (renamed the State General Administration of Sport in 1998), whose first head was Marshal He Long, a respected revolutionary general. Each province or municipality also had its corresponding sports commission.[17] The new sports system became a showpiece of communist egalitarianism, contrasted in propaganda with the class-based exclusivity of capitalist and colonial sports. Women were also provided with equal access in the sports school system, unlike sexist Western sport systems.[18]

However, the diplomatic isolation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) prevented athletes from taking part in international competitions. Led by the United States, most of the nations in the developed West, and the United Nations, continued

to recognize the Republic of China, the defeated regime that had fled to Taiwan under Chiang Kai-shek. The PRC's official policy was to refuse to be a member in international organizations that recognized Taiwan, and so it was not a member of most international sport federations. The International Table Tennis Federation was one of only three international sports federations in which the PRC had membership and Taiwan did not. It was headed by the Honourable Ivor Montagu, a member of the British Communist Party who had been invited to Moscow by the Comintern and whose long relationship with the Soviet Union included working for Soviet military intelligence during World War II. In 1959 he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize. Montagu had founded the International Table Tennis Federation in 1926 and remained its president for forty-one years. It was he who invited the newly founded PRC to join the ITTF.[19] Since table tennis was not then an Olympic sport, the Western powers had less interest in it. China won a gold medal in men's singles in the 1959 World Championships. The 1961 World Championships, which took place in Beijing, were the first world sports championships to be held in China, and China won three gold medals. Both events were broadcast live to the ten thousand television sets in Beijing at the time. The table-tennis victories played a large role in solidifying a new national identity.[20]

At the Soviet Union's urging, China also took part in the Helsinki 1952 Olympic Games. However, it would be China's last Olympic participation until the 1980 Winter and 1984 Summer Games because of the continued recognition of the Republic of China by the IOC. After its admission to the IOC in 1952, the Soviet Union acted as the leader of the socialist bloc inside the IOC, and attempted to coordinate actions and dictate policies among them. The Chinese side never felt that their Soviet counterparts were providing strong enough support to their attempts to have Taiwan expelled. The problem was that there were three countries divided by the Cold War: North and South Korea, East and West Germany, and China and Taiwan. Under pressure from the IOC, East and West Germany mounted a unified team from the 1956 to 1964 Olympic Games, but the alliance was never a happy one and East Germany wanted to have its own team. The China problem required a different solution, one that the Soviets were apparently reluctant to take on since it might have had a bearing on the German situation. The Soviet Union's perceived lack of support was part of the overall disintegration of the relationship that culminated in the Sino-Soviet split in 1960.[21]

China withdrew from the IOC in protest in 1958 and in 1963 joined Indonesia in the attempt to create an alternative competition for Third World and non-aligned nations, the aforementioned GANEFO, to which the Soviet Union gave superficial support. Planned as a regular quadrennial event, only one instalment was held due to the *coup d'état* in Indonesia and the eruption of the Cultural Revolution in China.[22] China's increasing isolation in global politics contributed to the 'ten years of chaos' of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Inside the sports world, the strange alliance of Western-educated physical educators with revolutionary cadres blew up during this period, when the Sports Commission suffered as much as any other ministry. Marshal He Long died in confinement, world table-tennis champion Rong Guotuan was harassed to death, the Sports Commission was disbanded and put under the control of

the military, and its cadres were sent to the countryside to 'labour with the peasants'. Because of the suffering that many sports leaders endured due to their links with the West, this period is remembered in official histories as the low point of PRC sport history. However, later English-language scholarship has shown that after the worst period was over by 1969, there was actually a good deal of effort put into building the grassroots-level sports system, which laid the foundation for the quick emergence of sports stars on the international scene after 1978.[23]

In March 1971 a personal plea from the head of the Japanese Table Tennis Federation persuaded Chairman Mao to send a team to the 31st World Cup in Table Tennis in Japan. When one of the members of the US team accidentally got onto the Chinese bus and was treated amicably, it was used as a starting point for the US team to express interest in visiting China. Chairman Mao decided to accept the US request, and later reciprocated by inviting a Chinese delegation to the US. 'Ping-pong diplomacy' paved the way for China's admission to the UN in October 1971, eight years before the establishment of diplomatic relations with the US. This, in turn, facilitated China's readmission to the IOC under the 'Olympic formula', in which Taiwan competes under the name 'Chinese Taipei' and is not allowed to use the name, flag, or anthem of the Republic of China.[24]

After the start of the market reforms in 1978, the Sports Commission was one of the first to implement economic reforms by allowing bonuses to coaches and athletes for winning competitions. China's return to the Summer Games happened to occur at the Los Angeles 1984 Olympics, the first Olympic Games to turn a profit using a highly commercialized model. It was an eye-opener for China, which immediately set out to implement sports marketing and corporate sponsorship. The 1987 National Games were the first to have international corporate sponsors such as Pepsi and Fuji Film. The intention of the minister in charge of the State Sports Commission, Li Menghua, was to make sports less dependent on government funding and encourage them to seek out support from 'society'.[25] However, over the next two decades, while the rest of the economy proceeded along the path of marketization, the sports system remained almost completely government-led and funded. In 1994 and 1995 the men's professional soccer and basketball league were formed, but only the soccer league became relatively financially independent, as some basketball teams continued to require government subsidies. Sport found itself a last bastion of the state-planned economy.

The government-led system made the pursuit of medals its top priority. As early as 1988 a Chinese journalist created a furore by criticizing the singular focus on medals and pointing out that little government effort and funding were devoted to school sport and popular sport.[26] This domestic criticism continued from that time on. Still, China's system provides comparatively more support to women's sports, minor sports, and new sports than a market-based system. This was the reason that China surpassed the US in the gold medal count in the Beijing Olympics, fifty-one to thirty-six. In China's system any child who is recruited by a team will have a chance to develop his or her talent without financial obstacles, and many of China's top athletes come from poor rural backgrounds.

When Beijing won the bid for the Olympic Games in 2001 it ensured that the pursuit of medals would remain important so that China would make a good showing in its own Olympics.[27] Serious discussion of reform was postponed. After the Games, the discussion continued as to whether the State General Administration for Sport should be dismantled and sports placed under the Ministry of Education and/or the Ministry of Culture, or even under the Chinese Olympic Committee, a non-governmental 'social organization'. However, the leaders of the General Administration fought to maintain it as an independent body, while beginning to give more attention to school and popular sport. A severe conflict remained between the Sport Commission system and university sport. Some universities had begun to develop high-level teams, but the athletes were not allowed to take part in the national championships run by the Sports General Administration.

In the 2008 Olympic soccer competition the performance of the Chinese team was considered a national embarrassment. After the Games, an investigation into corruption resulted in the arrest and sentencing of Nan Yong, who had been simultaneously the Party Secretary *and* the Vice Director of the Chinese Football Association *and* of the Chinese Football Management Centre. Chinese commentators argued that one problem was that soccer was only partly marketized. The Chinese Football Association was responsible for its administration, while the Football Management Centre was responsible for managing corporate sponsorships and business affairs; in reality, these were one and the same, an example of the 'one office, two signs' that characterizes much of China's political economy. With the same person holding four different positions in what was essentially the same office, both power and money were concentrated in the hands of one person, and the system was open to corruption. In this respect, Chinese soccer in particular—and the sports system in general—were emblematic of China's larger position, poised halfway between a state-planned and a market economy.

It is interesting to speculate on what led communist sporting regimes to focus so much on the Olympic Games. In fact, communism and olympism had much in common. Both were internationalist; both sought to use physical culture and sport to educate; both believed in social improvement and testing the limits of human performance. Under communism, the state played a central role, and in the Olympic movement, too, states were the fundamental units of representation. No one could compete as an individual. Both were factories of invented traditions and rituals. Both loved a good parade. Yet just how generations of athletes, officials, fans, and journalists all got to those parades was another, often very different story.

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